

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

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Editorial

United Nations—imperialism's colonial office

'The time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty has passed'. (Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary General of the United Nations)

There is much talk today of a new international order led by the United Nations (UN), in which the problems of individual nations can be dealt with by international intervention. It would be heartwarming if this was a precursor to tackling problems which are indeed beyond the scope of single states and which are the scourge of humanity—economic crisis, war, poverty, famine and environmental destruction. However, rhetoric by US and British politicians about 'humanitarian' concerns have resulted not in feeding the starving but bombing them in the name of the UN.

Whilst it is to be expected that the US and Britain would use the UN to mask their ambitions, it is shocking to see sections of the left/liberal 'Intelligentsia' swallowing this. Whilst 250,000 Iraqis lie buried in the sand, courtesy of the UN, these intellectuals peddle the illusion that the UN can play a positive international role. One expects the USA to bomb the oppressed, one does not wish to be told by leftists that this ushers in a new dawn of international brotherhood. Thus Martin Shaw writes:

he is already dusting off his solar topee and khaki shorts.

United against the poor

Until the 1889-1990 collapse of the socialist bloc, the USSR, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, was to some extent able to prevent the UN becoming a rubber-stamp for US imperial policy. This is no longer the case. The US now dominates every aspect of UN policy. What it wants it gets. Hence in 1990 when the US set out to destroy Iraq and prevent it challenging US domination of the Gulf, it sought the fig-leaf of UN

UN led new international democratic order.

Yesterday was bad enough...

The UN has never been a neutral or democratic international institution. It was formed in June 1945—along with the International Monetary Fund (1945), the World Bank (1946) and the GATT (1948)—to prevent socialism, restrain the USSR and control emerging independent Third World nations. Even then the US exercised a dominating influence. Among the UN's first operations was a major attack on socialist Korea in 1950. US President Truman ordered US troops into action against the Korean Peoples Army. This was approved by the UN and later, US and international forces operating under 'UN command' waged a war in which four million Koreans were slaughtered.

The UN, with its Security Council whose five permanent members have a right of veto (USA, Britain, France, China and Russia), reflects the balance of world power. In contrast, General Assembly resolutions expressing the standpoint of the majority of UN member states are not legally binding. For example for the past 25 years the UN has, in Resolution 242, demanded Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel and the USA have blithely ignored this. Under the Reagan and Bush Administration the US used its veto over 25 times to protect Israel, usually with British support.

Tomorrow looks even worse...

The main imperialist powers are seeking to overcome their crisis at the expense of the Third World and each other. Each is developing its spheres of influence: the USA in Latin America, Mexico, Canada and the Middle East; Japan in South East Asia; Germany in Eastern Europe and Russia. A new age of colonial conquest and rivalry is being born. Economically challenged by Japan and Germany, the USA today retains its position as sole superpower (with Britain parrot-like on its shoulder) by virtue of its military strength and semi-colonial empire. But Japan and Germany also have colonial ambitions. Hence the constitutional changes allowing them to re-arm and engage in overseas military operations. Much to the alarm of Britain and France, they have designs on France's and Britain's Security Council seats.

Mindful of these potential rivals and seizing the opportunities of its victory in the Cold

For the past 25 years the UN has, in Resolution 242, demanded Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel and the USA have blithely ignored this. Under the Reagan and Bush Administrations the US used its veto over 25 times to protect Israel, usually with British support.

War, the US is now restructuring the UN to better control it. As John Pilger so rightly puts it:

'Boutros Boutros-Ghali was installed by Washington with enthusiastic support from the Foreign Office. He has since set about turning the UN into America's principal colonial office.'

The UN Charter does not allow the UN to intervene in a state's domestic affairs and prohibits armed intervention other than in self-defence. Whilst noted more in the breach than in the observance, this provides at least a point of appeal for countries under attack. Pilger shows that the US, through Boutros-Ghali, is using a new concept—'preventative diplomacy'—to bypass this inconvenience. This allows military intervention where 'threats to peace' exist. Anything the US wishes to do can be justified under such terms. Iraq and Somalia are just the beginning.

The return of Victorian missionaries

Far from a new age of rational international arbitration, we are entering a colonial era where any poor country which defies imperial wishes can be attacked and subdued. Yet the Martin Shaws of this world insists that:

'The West has an historic responsibility to undertake this global leadership... only the West has the economic, political and military resources and the democratic and multi-national institutions to undertake it.'

This is the racist superiority of the Victorian missionary. The USA, which cannot provide the basic needs of much of its own population, has nothing to tell the world about progress. Nor has Britain which holds down Ireland by brute force. The Victorians had their missionaries to accompany armed intervention with soothing words, so today's colonialists have Martin Shaws to sing lullabies to the intelligentsia.

The imperialists have huge economic, military and political resources. An unequal battle is being waged in which socialists in the imperialist countries must oppose imperialist intervention, fight for the right of nations to self-determination and expose the UN's legalistic cover for a new age of conquest.



Palestine: no UN action here

Oppose all Pit closures



Women have set up a protest camp at Markham Main colliery

MAXINE WILLIAMS

When the closure of 31 pits was announced last year, it was evident that the issue could become a focus for the political discontent growing in Britain. The angry public response split the Tories and revealed their vulnerability. The government sought to buy time and defuse public anger by conducting various reviews on the mining industry. It was clear that unless political pressure was kept up on this issue, the government would continue with its closure plans in a more stealthy form—what Arthur Scargill has called 'salami tactics'.

Whilst the miners, their families and the NUM leadership kept up what pressure they could, holding camps, local rallies and marches, the Labour Party and TUC either kept silent on the issue or desperately manoeuvred to prevent effective public mobilisation. The NUM, weakened by its 1985 defeat, has once again been forced to go it alone.

Now the latest report by the Trade and Industry Select Committee is recommending a 'compromise' which allows the 'salami tactic' to proceed. Whilst suggesting a £500 million subsidy over the next five years, it argues that greater productivity will be needed, meaning fewer miners and fewer pits. Of the 10 pits which Heseltine has illegally shut down and which are obviously most vulnerable, it recommends that production be restarted and that any future closures go through the review procedure—something that should have happened anyway. The NUM has rejected the report.

The Select Committee contains MPs from all parties, including the Labour Party, and agreed its recommendations unanimously. Little more can have been expected from such a body. Unfortunately, however, because no focus of opposition to all pit closures has been built, its Report is likely to become the centre of debate and Parliamentary haggling. The Tories will seek to buy off their backbench

opposition with as little as possible—the backbenchers are saying they require 15 pits to be saved.

What is at stake is the future of 30,000 mining jobs, the mining communities and tens of thousands of associated jobs. The scale of public support demonstrated last year meant that this issue could have become the rallying-point for a struggle nationally against unemployment and against this government. The TUC is horrified at the prospect of mass mobilisations or strikes. The NUM has been trying to get a one day strike of mining and rail unions; the leaders of the NUR told them that the TUC had pressurised them against this and would 'take a dim view' of any action. The NUM and rail unions are nevertheless balloting on 3 March for a weekly one-day strike.

The Labour Party has been silent on the issue, hating the NUM far more than it does the Conservative government. Indeed they have been so silent that in the public mind the main opposition to government plans has been seen as coming from the NUM itself and from backbench Tory MPs. Once again those sections of the British population which are thoroughly discontented have been dispersed by an Opposition Party that opposes nothing and leads nobody.

In the last issue of FRFI we warned that the government would 'try the phased-in closure approach and will divide opposition by claiming that the miners, in opposing all pit closures, are being unreasonable.' Now, more than ever, this is the danger. And the TUC and Labour Party have left the miners in this exposed position. It is essential to rally behind the lead given by the women of mining communities who are braving the cold at their camps outside threatened pits and have called a march for 6 February. We must support them and oppose all pit closures.

Demonstrate Saturday 6 February
Assemble Embankment, London at 11am. March called by Women Against Pit Closures.



Yugoslavia: UN armed intervention on the agenda

agreement. The US bribed and bullied its way to making the Gulf War a UN operation:

'At the time of the crisis, India... needed billions of dollars from the IMF. Drought-stricken Zimbabwe also needed help from the IMF. Both were acutely conscious that the US enjoyed an effective veto in the IMF... As a result both... made speeches against UN resolutions and then voted for them.'

Yemen did vote against the US... and its ambassador was told by American diplomat John Kelly... that its action "was the most expensive No Vote you ever made." Yemen promptly lost \$70m in aid. (The Guardian 14 January 1993)

So confident has the USA become of UN endorsement that its latest bombings of Iraq in January did not even have the legal cover of a UN resolution. The US, Britain and France imposed the colonial-style exclusion zones in Iraqi-controlled territory without reference to the UN.

Emboldened by its success in the Gulf, the US sought and gained UN Security Council approval for invading Somalia—another long standing strategic ambition. Just as in the Gulf War, its true aims were disguised by phrases about 'humanitarianism'. But the first striking image of the operation in Somalia was of a large white US soldier holding down a handcuffed Somali. That image writ large is the reality behind all the talk of a



Iraq: under UN attack

'opposition to western military interventions in the third world... is now downright wrong.' (New Statesman). He continues:

'To uphold national sovereignty and damn intervention is to give a free hand to genocide. The UN and the great western powers are doubtless imperfect tools... but only they, in most cases, can stand between the people and those who would destroy them.'

Only by exercising great self-control has Shaw avoided calling on the West to shoulder the 'white man's burden'. No doubt

Millions on the dole

GAVIN SCOTT

On 12 November 1993, the day of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, 86 firms went bust with nearly 800 people losing their jobs. But the rate of redundancies has escalated since then.

In the following week, 5,000 rail workers were told they were being made redundant within four months.

On 2 December, Cammell Laird, the shipbuilders, had announced closure of its yard in Merseyside, so ending the jobs of 929.

The next day, plans to cut 26,000 jobs were revealed. The Post Office is cutting 16,200 jobs as part of a £1 billion 'investment programme'. Royal Ordnance, the armaments makers, announced 1,300 redundancies. British Coal said that another 4,000, on top of the 30,000 announced in the pits debacle in October, had to go. Fords are also cutting 4,000 soon, as the British part of its European-wide scaling down involving a total 10,000 redundancies, with about 500 more already scheduled to go in 1994. Courtaulds, the textiles group, declared 900 redundant. On the same day, 200 went from the Lloyds of London insurance market, 200 from three London International photo-processing laboratory closures, 100 from Severn Trent Water, and 242 from Guy Warwick in Nottinghamshire, many of whom are wives of the miners under threat at Bilsthorpe colliery.

On 8 December, the TSB, Britain's sixth-largest bank, said it was to axe 650 jobs (the four big clearing banks have cut 50,000,

a fifth of their branch workforce, in the past two-and-a-half years). East Midlands Electricity announced that it was cutting 260 jobs over 1993, another 400 over the next few years, and lowering the pay and benefits of its contract workers. 120 workers at Longannet coal-fired power station in Fife also saw the lights go out that day.

On 12 January, local government leaders told ministers that they would have to make thousands redundant because of government cuts, with 18,000 already identified, and there were 'bound to be far more'.

The following week, British Gas announced 1,240 were losing their jobs and that another 2,000 are to be 'transferred to other business units'. IBM UK then promised to repeat last year's cut of 1,000 jobs, following record losses world-wide.

It all came to a head with the announcement that December had seen the sharpest monthly increase, of 68,800, of unemployment benefit claimants for eighteen months. This took the total to just under three million, 10.5 per cent of the workforce, the highest level since 1987. It is now over the three million mark, even using the government's much-laundered figures.

Youth unemployment (that among 16-24 year olds) has virtually doubled since the beginning of the recession from 497,900 in April 1990 to 914,800 last October, according to Youthaid and the Unemployment Unit. The number of the youngest unemployed (16 and 17 year olds) had jumped up to 124,700: the highest since January 1987. These are the only figures available for this category because the government

claims they are all put on the Youth Training scheme. 97,300 of them get no state help because the benefit 'safety net' was abolished for 16-17 year olds in September 1988. The YT places will be even more scarce next year because of the financial difficulties of the local authorities that run them.

Worst of all are the figures for employment, because they show the actual fall in jobs, which is not matched by the official unemployment figure. Many people who lose their jobs are not entitled to benefits immediately, or perhaps never. Employment plummeted by 362,000 in the third quarter - a decline of 1.75 per cent in just three months. The worst previous decline in employment in any quarter of this recession was 221,000. The shake-out of manufacturing jobs was 128,000, which is also bigger than the previous peak of 104,000 in the first quarter of 1990. These will filter through to become sharp rises in claimants in the next few months. So much for the claim that things are now getting worse more slowly!

Ironically, the Department of Employment is likely to make more than 3,000 of its workers unemployed this year because of cuts in public expenditure. This includes cutting the Employment Service that is responsible for training the jobless and guiding them back to work! Both Gillian Shephard, Secretary of State for Employment, and Sir Geoffrey Holland, the most senior official in the Department of Employment, said last year: 'We are not the department of unemployment, we are the department of employment.' On yer bike, Gill!

Ex-socialists defend war machine

ROBERT CLOUGH

The Morning Star (produced by the Communist Party of Britain) has decided on its policy for economic recovery: defend the European Fighter Aircraft (EFA) project. In an editorial on 30 October 1992, it argued that if BAe and Rolls Royce continued with their current redundancy plans, the consequent 'rundown of this high-tech industry would deepen the gloom in British manufacturing industry and make recovery more difficult'. It concluded that 'the present choice revolves around either building EFA or buying a US product. Dropping the EFA project would decimate employment in a key, high-tech industry and cause workforce morale to plummet.'

Echoing the Morning Star editorial a week later, Tim Webb, MSF national officer, said that there is no choice: '... our members will be diversified into unemployment, mini-car driving, or if they are lucky, into jobs which require less than half their talents and experience. Whether or not EFA is a military necessity, it must be better to keep people in productive work, abreast of high technology and with a reasonable income.'

The New Communist Party, erstwhile critics of the Morning Star, also supported EFA. Their Industrial Bulletin for December stated that the aerospace workers' 'defence of the military project has caused some confusion within the peace movement'; their arguments as to why they supported EFA are worth quoting.

'The cancellation of EFA, without the prospect of conversion, would leave aerospace workers in the worst possible position. The result would be the virtual collapse of the aerospace industry with massive job and technology losses. It would of course not result in any arms reduction as the government would simply purchase US-built equivalents. But that would mean greater domination by US imperialism over British foreign policy. And it should not be forgotten that the working class overall would bear an added burden, deriving from the consequent increase in the deficit in the balance of payments.'

These people are not communists; they are little imperialists, who wish to defend the privileges and narrow self-interests of the most backward sections of the British working class. Aerospace workers are part of an affluent section of the working class which completely

depends on the imperialist armaments industry. They are not interested in the most minimal class struggle, only in defending their right to produce weapons of mass destruction. It is utter sophistry to pretend otherwise; such weapons are to be used in the immediate pursuit of British and US imperial interests - as the Tornado is in Iraq - or to bolster its economic fortunes, through sales to reactionary imperialist regimes. The recent £5bn Saudi order for 48 Tornados may 'save 19,000 British jobs', but provides the feudal dictatorship with a tempting hand for the next round of Gulf slaughter.

The demand to protect the EFA project reflects the utter backwardness and bankruptcy of the official British labour movement, whose interests are now always at odds with the interests of the mass of the working class outside its ranks, and indeed with the mass of humanity. The mass of humanity has no interest in the EFA project; it has no interest in imperialist military production. The NCP calls the peace movement 'confused': there can be no confusion. Honest communists oppose EFA, oppose the campaign of the trade unions to defend it, and oppose this shameful capitulation to imperialism. ■

NHS: winners and losers

ROBERT CLOUGH

Complaining about what he described as the slow pace of NHS reforms, Len Peach, Chief Executive of the Freeman NHS Trust in Newcastle commented recently that 'We have got to come to terms with the ideas of winners and losers.' The question is: who are the winners and who are the losers?

Winners are the exploding population of chief executives, directors, assistant directors and business managers (up 200% over the last four years), many at ever-inflated rates of pay. Recent job advertisements include a Head of Public Affairs (£24-28,000) to be part of Mid-Essex Hospitals' 'total communications effort' - in other words, public relations. Then there is Lucille Company, lately from Conservative Central Office, one of the driving forces behind the reforms, who has picked up a nice number as the £60,000 per annum Chief Executive of the NHS Trust Federation. Not to

mention all the new Directors of Marketing that populate most of the Executives of the opted-out hospitals, but this time usually at a mere £30-45,000 per annum. Chief Executives are on anything from £45,000 upwards. Other winners include the first fundholding GPs, some of whom have ended up with first year's surpluses in excess of £100,000; such are the rewards for enterprise.

The losers? 5,000 ancillary workers who have lost their jobs over the last four years. 20,000 workers who will lose their jobs as a result of the Tomlinson proposals (a disproportionate number being black or Irish). 8,500 nurses and midwives, since that is the number of such jobs also lost over the past four years. Patients of non-fundholding GPs who are now unable to have operations since there is no money to pay for them.

As more and more hospitals hit cash problems in the last months of the financial year, so there has been an acceleration of ward closures in every part of

the country. In London, where Tomlinson claimed a surplus capacity, there has been yellow alert for several weeks with admissions cancelled for lack of space. All hospitals in South East Thames Region overspent, as are many in North East Thames. The pressure on them to treat patients of GP fundholders since these will bring extra money; this pressure is overt in hospitals such as Watlington, Hereford and Guildford to name but a few. The two-system is becoming an even more apparent feature of Tory reforms.

Meanwhile, what is the people's party saying? Mr Blunkett, Labour spokesperson for Health, has confessed, 'I do not think should have any hang-ups about the market', saying that Labour would not abolish trusts. He continued: 'You cannot stop the operation of the market simply to reveal and destroy winners and losers'. The question is, which of Len Peach and David Blunkett has a surer grasp of the reality of markets?



East London march against hospital closures

Pensioners everywhere - an inspiring tale of how to get things done

RENE WALLER

On 16 December, a meeting of representatives from all the London boroughs was held at Baden Powell House to decide how and when we London pensioners could use our travel permits after 31 March '93. One of the options to be considered was to make our permits invalid on the tube - just imagine the frustration of old people waiting in the cold wind and rain outside a tube station for erratic, infrequent bus services, with a visible alternative available, at a price! The mere idea made pensioners determined to make their voices heard.

Agreement to receive a deputation had been reached, but judging from the small size of the hall only 3 or 4 friends were expected to accompany our spokesmen: over 100 turned up. Long before the advertised time, pensioners were packing the two small lifts and mounting the stairs. Soon all the chairs set out for us were occupied, pensioners were standing at the back, and two or three deep all round the hall, filling every available corner and perching on every ledge.

Most of the room was filled by two long tables with one across the top on which were arranged the sets of agendas and other papers in neat piles, an empty chair before each set.

'We want more chairs!' called the pensioners. Impossible, they said. 'Anyway, there are already far too many people in the room, the fire regulations are being infringed. All those standing must leave before the meeting can start.' They said there were two empty rooms nearby where we could sit and receive reports of the proceedings. 'No,' we chorused. 'Not blooming likely, we're staying put,' added the more vocal. 'And we're not standing, neither' one woman shouted, reaching forward to pull back one of the lines of empty chairs intended for delegates and, noticing my stick, sat me on it! Then, moving along the line she pulled back three or four more chairs and seated more pensioners with sticks.

The arrangements were now looking less neat with visible gaps in the line of empty chairs: what were the organisers to do? There were over a hundred angry and determined pensioners in an upstairs room, all elderly and some really disabled. Throw them down the stairs? It might not look so good reported in the press. So after the failure of further appeals for our co-operation, the waiting representatives at last filed in and at once agreed to hear our spokespersons.

Two very good statements were made explaining how pensioners relied on the travel passes to go shopping, visit children or grandchildren, see the

doctor, friends and relatives, hospital, not to mention to maintain social calls and maintain interest in hobbies. We were all one mind and prepared to defend our lifeline. We were indeed very distrustful, disinclined to leave at all for a decision was made, but the face of threats to adjourn meeting we did feel there much to be said for getting a decision whilst the impact of our demonstration was vivid so we made a strategic withdrawal.

We had judged correctly, it was not long before we learned that after all a unanimous decision in favour of no change for further year had been taken.

We'd won! So relieved and pleased were some pensioners that they hugged and kissed their neighbours. In the evening the recalcitrant boroughs of Bromley and Haxley had backed down, not fancying isolation and perhaps this was not quite the issue on which to make stand for monetarism?

I was happy and proud to be part of this protest, proud of age group and of my sex, for women had been particularly vocal and militant, proud to be a member of Lewisham Pensioners Action Group which had done more than its share to make the demonstration a success: need hardly add I think it is action to be emulated, passively admired.

IN BRIEF

■ Hoover sell-out

On Friday 22 January the workers at the Hoover factory in Cambuslang, Scotland voted overwhelmingly to accept a deal negotiated between unions and management involving loss of sick pay for temporary workers, loss of shift payments, restrictions on unions and a pay freeze. Hoover management had brazenly laid out the terms - the deal must be accepted or the factory closed and operations moved to France.

The consequences for all the working class, are bitterly obvious. The choice is to accept the dictates of capitalist profitability while you have a job or join the millions on the dole. French Hoover workers whose factory has been closed in the wake of the Scottish deal now suffer the consequences.

According to Jimmy Airlie of the AEU, the agreement allows the company to secure 'new working practices to make it more efficient'. How about abolishing breaks, safety regulations, wages even, in the interests of 'efficiency'? What about the fate of the French workers? For the unions to dress this deal up as an achievement is a deceitful but predictable scandal, for sections of the workforce to herald the deal as a victory is a tragic demonstration of the inherent weakness of the labour and trade union movement. This was a defeat for the workers of Hoover and a defeat for the working class.

Michael Taylor

■ Britain bottom on benefits

As unemployment figures rise to 3 million (with the reality closer to 4 million), there is little cheer for those seeking unemployment benefit in 1993. A new EC league table, showing benefit as a percentage of income, places Britain squarely at the bottom with just 14%. Most countries average at least 40%+ (with Luxembourg 80% and Denmark 90%) and even our nearest rivals, the Italians with 26%, often receiving income on top from regional or industrial benefits.

■ What the left hand gives...

Last year Labour-controlled Southwark Council evicted more than 1,300 tenants because of rent arrears. Why were so many tenants late with their rent? It couldn't have anything to do with the Council's rating as one of the slowest payers of housing benefit in the country, could it?

William Higham

■ Cardiff 3 victory

On 10 December, the Court of Appeal freed the Cardiff 3 after four years of wrongful imprisonment. The first words from Yusef Abdullahi, Tony Paris and Steve Miller were about the many other innocent prisoners still in gaol. "Yusef Abdullahi spoke of Winston Silcott and Raphael Rowe, one of the M25 Three, with whom he was held in Carlisle Prison. 'There is no way I will forget them as I know they would not forget me.' He summed up the injustice the Cardiff 3 suffered as 'the most racist case in the history of the South Wales police'.

In previous miscarriages, we have heard endless parrot cries that such 'mistakes' could not happen now. The Cardiff 3 investigation took place under PACE codes of practice and the results were the same false confessions, prison grasse etc as in pre-PACE frame-ups.

Chas Newkey-Burden

South Africa

ANC edges closer to a deal with regime

CAROL BRICKLEY

On 29 January, FW de Klerk opened the new session of the South African white-only Parliament promising a schedule of 'reform' which would include power sharing, 'strong' regional government, 'checks and balances' to prevent abuse of power, 'sensible' protection of cultural diversity, the 'economic security of owners and investors', and security of tenure for civil servants and teachers. All this was intended to impress upon the white minority that their privileges are safe in de Klerk's hands and that the regime is controlling the negotiation process with the African National Congress (ANC).

The ANC immediately condemned de Klerk's speech as 'boastful' and insisted that there is a 'huge gulf' between the negotiating parties. Press reports, however, suggested otherwise. De Klerk claimed that there is a consensus on future developments including the power-sharing principle, free market economics and a degree of federalism. The ANC's own framework for the future includes major concessions to white privilege on all these issues, including security of tenure for civil servants.

On 20 January *The Financial Times* concluded from the recent bi-lateral talks between the ANC and the regime that both had decided that South Africa is not ready for democracy, and instead should be governed by a 'benevolent' elite. How 'benevolent' this elite will be will depend on the balance of power in an interim government and co-

alition cabinet. It is certain that the ANC has continued to make major concessions in order to get a toehold on the ladder to power, whereas de Klerk appears to have made none.

Nelson Mandela has offered to remove all sanctions ahead of any tangible reforms and in exchange for promises from the most inveterate liars. He has also publicly agreed to a five-year term for an 'interim' government which will almost certainly protect white privileges by some form of white veto.



Winnie Mandela

On a 4-day visit to the USA for President Clinton's inauguration, Mandela netted donations of \$300,000 for the ANC including a large donation from Apple Computers which is anxious to break sanctions with ANC agreement. ANC spokesperson Aziz Pahad stated that Mandela's trip was used to drum up future investments in South Africa and support for the ANC's election fund.

The press has reported that 'unease' is growing at secret deals between the ANC leadership and the National Party. One symptom of this has been a

series of scathing public attacks by Winnie Mandela. In an open letter to the South African *Sunday Times* she stated:

"The concern is that this new amalgam of power is promoting its own self-interest and overlooking the plight and needs of the underprivileged masses both black and white. Where in this can we find the promise of the brave new non-racial, non-sexist democracy? The quick fix solutions sought by our leaders can only benefit a few, and will backfire massively on the country as a whole."

In the first 26 days of 1993 more than 130 people were killed in violence in the townships and Inkatha's aspirations for federal autonomy remain a fly in the ointment of ANC/National Party agreement. In the face of a devastated economy, mass black unemployment and homelessness the ANC's adoption of free market 'solutions' in place of democratic majority rule can only lead to the disillusion which Winnie Mandela has predicted.

When the ANC leadership formally seals its alliance with the regime in an interim government, it will first have to deal with the forces who continue to promote a democratic future and liberation. Its condemnation of the armed actions by the Pan African Congress's military wing APLA in December as 'terrorist' is a clear sign that it will have no hesitation in agreeing to the repression of the liberation movement.

Meanwhile the PAC has held a further bilateral meeting with the regime where it declined to dissociate itself from APLA actions.

Angola

Imperialists back Unita in Angolan civil war

CAT WIENER

The civil war raging in Angola since the rebel Unita movement refused to accept electoral defeat by the popular MPLA government in the September 1992 elections, is the shameful product of the UN's complicity with imperialism.

Throughout the campaign, Unita leader Savimbi repeatedly warned that he would not accept anything less than victory, and threatened to cut off the legs of his opponents or make them dig their own graves. UN Special Representative Margaret Anstee continued to vouch for his democratic credentials, and turned a blind eye to Unita's repeated breaches of the May 1991 ceasefire, and to its refusal to demobilise its forces. Hence Unita was fully prepared for an immediate return to war. The UN's acts have supported the strategic aims of Unita's long-term allies, the US and South Africa, who, having backed the 16-year war of terror, finally expected the war-weary Angolans to vote their puppet into power, and so

ensure imperialist access to Angola's vast oil, diamond and mineral reserves.

Only token condemnation of Unita's blatant sabotage of the election process, or even of its taking of foreign hostages was offered. Apartheid foreign minister Pik Botha flew out to offer Savimbi his support; the US condemned the MPLA for fighting to re-capture towns taken by



Unita leader Jonas Savimbi

Unita, and the UN has threatened to pull out completely if a ceasefire - on Unita's terms - is not achieved. All the real pressure is being exerted on the MPLA to accept a power-sharing deal with Savimbi. This is the

only outcome that imperialism will accept in the talks that started in Addis Ababa on 28 January.

Meanwhile Unita, fighting alongside white foreign mercenaries and suspected members of the South African and Zairean defence forces, has taken the vital oil city of Soyo, and some important diamond areas; heavy battles are continuing around these and Huambo, Savimbi's stronghold.

It is as ever the Angolan people who are paying the price for imperialism's greed. The war has already cost thousands of lives; the World Food Programme has warned that at least 2.5 million Angolans face starvation in the coming months as a direct result of the civil war.

But in spite of the setbacks suffered by the MPLA, the Angolan people have continued to resist. Where the government has armed the people, they have fought on their side against Unita. After the victorious battle at Lubango, a local police officer said: 'We do not intend to end the fighting by negotiations with Unita. We don't need negotiations. We have negotiated enough.'

United States

Meet the new boss

TREVOR RAYNE

Four days of partying were topped off with the inauguration of William Jefferson Clinton as the 42nd President of the United States. Say goodbye to Arnold Schwarzenegger and Frank Sinatra, say hello to Jack Nicholson and Diana Ross. The '60s generation' has come to town, a-jivin' and rock'n'rollin' the blues right outta this place, or so the story goes. Generations come and go, money stays in place.

The new President addresses the people: 'Today we celebrate the mystery of American renewal' and so many people who want change, who want some democracy and justice in this world, want to believe him. There are none so gullible as those who would be fooled. Hanging on to the illusion that an electoral system in which almost as many people did not vote in November as did, can represent the people. Clinging to the belief that institutions which are dominated by the biggest concentration of financial power the world has ever seen can bring an improvement to the lot of people's lives.

Clinton's electoral campaign was a naked appeal to the interests of better-off workers and the US middle class; the people who had deserted the Democrats for Reagan then Bush, people afraid of the economic and social crisis gripping US capitalism and what it might mean for their privileged lives. The fact that this appeal was dressed up in Fleetwood Mac, blow-dry hair-dos and promises that can pop like bubbles, changes nothing. Big money is still in charge.

Of Clinton's 18 cabinet appointments, 14 are lawyers - people commanding incomes of over half-a-million dollars a year. What does it matter that nine of them are under 50? They are the bought brains and consciences of something that flickered and died. A youth that was bribed.

The key economic and foreign policy positions are occupied by trusty servants of monopoly

power. Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen is a millionaire with holdings in oil, gas, real estate and insurance. He backed Reagan's tax cuts for the rich, death squads in El Salvador and the contras against Nicaragua. Alongside him are Wall Street bankers. Chief Economist at the Treasury is Lawrence Summers, the man who as Vice-President of the World Bank wrote the memo suggesting that more of the polluting industries should be located in the Third World, especially given that Third World peoples had shorter life expectancies and might therefore expect to escape pollution-related diseases like cancer.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher deputised that role during the Carter presidency. His policy planner served as ambassador to Israel for eight years, under both Carter and Bush. The Middle East policy team remains more-or-less intact from Bush to Clinton. When a black Cuban-American lawyer, Mario Baeza, was suggested for the Latin American policy post, the Florida-based anti-Castro lobby exploded. Baeza had visited Havana and spoken of the desirability of ending the 30-year blockade. He is likely to be replaced by a Bentsen associate who formerly served as ambassador to Grenada.

For those who 'don't [want to] stop thinking about tomorrow', we pretty soon saw what it will bring. Within days of the Clinton inauguration three air raids over Iraq, six months of discussions about gays being in the army, a complete reversal of his commitment to allow Haitian refugees into the USA, the tearing up of budget promises to cut taxes on the middle classes, and *The Guardian* newspaper holding a one-day 'Clinton Economics Conference' to advise the Labour Party on 'the art of indicating to the Master of Capital that you are a safe bet, while suggesting to vital constituencies further down the income pyramid that you are an implacable battering ram against the ramparts of privilege.' (Alexander Cockburn). Tomorrow will bring anger and what once flickered will burn. ■

Death of Kittu

Kittu - Sathasivam Krishnakumar - was killed after the cargo ship he was in was intercepted on 13 January by the Indian Navy. Kittu was a senior Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam Central Committee member. The ship was in international waters when intercepted, but 'exploded' just 12 miles south of Madras. The Indian government stands accused of piracy and murder.

Kittu was a revolutionary who joined the LTTE in 1978. In an interview he gave to *FAFI* in February 1990 he said: 'We believe in the historical process and the lessons it teaches. We believe in history.' May the Tamil people fight on to victory.

IN MEMORIAM

TERRY O'HALLORAN

1 May 1952-23 January 1993

Four years after his death, we remember our comrade Terry O'Halloran. We remember Terry as a communist and as a journalist. He wrote on many issues. He is remembered most for his contribution on Ireland and the prison struggle but he also wrote extensively on social issues such as homelessness, followed the Broadwater Farm trials and the Wapping printworkers' dispute and wrote biting criticism of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement and its sectarian manoeuvrings.

On 23 January 1993 30 comrades from the RCG, City of London Anti-Apartheid Group and the National Union of Journalists paid tribute to Terry at a memorial outside the South African Embassy.

The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund was set up to provide books and newspapers for prisoners. In the past four years it has supplied 250 books, periodicals and other items.

Ireland

New government—no new solutions

SIMONE DEWHURST

The ruling coalition between Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats finally came asunder towards the end of 1993. The election that followed produced no overall majority and, to remain in power, the Fianna Fail Party negotiated a deal with the Labour Party to form a new government. With spiralling unemployment and political scandals, the Irish electorate was obviously registering a vote of no confidence in the two main parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. Although the Labour Party secured a new high of 33 seats in the Dail, their programme for government represents nothing new in Irish politics. In the present economic climate, the prospects look dismal.

The Irish economy is in a critical state. Unemployment stands at 300,000 (20 per cent of the work force). Until recently certain economic indicators, ie low inflation and low interest rates, gave the appearance of a reasonably healthy economy. However, the recent currency crisis revealed very serious underlying problems.

Before 1979 the Punt did not exist; the Irish currency had the same value as sterling. In March that year Ireland joined the European Monetary System (EMS) while Britain remained

outside. This precipitated a separate currency for Ireland and a changing relationship between the Punt and other European currencies, mainly the Deutschmark. Large quantities of European capital were invested in Irish industry and land. As more foreign money was invested, the dependency on Britain was reduced. Although Britain remained Ireland's main trading partner, the Irish economy became increasingly tied to the Deutschmark.

In September 1992 Britain pulled out of the ERM and sterling was devalued. Traditionally the Punt would have been expected to follow suit. Ireland's relationship with the stronger German currency has put the government under severe pressure not to devalue. The government is adamant that a fixed exchange rate to the Deutschmark will be maintained. The implications of this overvalued exchange rate, however, are high interest rates and even greater increases in unemployment in the long term. The overvaluation of the exchange rate has been a factor in Ireland's rising unemployment ever since the country joined EMS. It is one of the main reasons why unemployment has increased from 80,000 in 1978 to 300,000 today, despite massive emigration.

Ireland has a huge national debt, the highest per capita of any country in the world. Between 1979 and 1991 foreign

borrowing increased by €12bn but the external reserves increased by only £2bn. The central bank used the other £10bn to buy Irish currency in order to keep the price of the Punt artificially high.

The defence of an overvalued Punt means that Irish exports are far less competitively priced; the result of which is widespread redundancies and factory closures in every section of Irish industry. For example, Broom Appliance Manufacturers (Co Carlow) are placing one third of their 1,000 strong workforce on short time; 147 jobs are to go at Gardaur Textiles (Dublin) and Waterford Crystal is to shed over 5,000 jobs in the next two years. This is just the tip of the iceberg; employers estimate that a minimum of 25,000 jobs have been placed in jeopardy and a large number of mortgage holders have seen their debts mount to record levels.

Whatever the outcome of the currency crisis, the Irish working class will be the loser. If the Punt is devalued and realigned with a crumbling sterling, Irish workers can expect huge losses in real income. If the government's stance against devaluation is maintained, further unemployment and hardship will be their lot under the new Fianna Fail/Labour coalition.

As we go to press the Irish government has bowed to the pressure of the money markets and announced a 10% devaluation.

IN BRIEFS

British planned blood bath

Amongst the Public Records released recently, having been kept top secret for 70 years, was a memorandum showing how the British government intended to crush the Irish nationalist movement in 1921. The 'immediate and drastic action' the government planned if it could not partition Ireland included: making the possession of arms punishable by death; imposing martial law; suppression of the Dail as a 'treasonable organisation'; blockading southern Ireland. The civil courts were to be closed, the press censored, Irish manufacturing industry shut down, a massive internment programme of 20,000 people introduced and an extra 50,000 British troops sent in.

The British government, led by Lloyd George, had told James Craig, loyalist Prime Minister of the Six Counties, of this plan. Loyalist forces were already carrying out pogroms there. But it was the democratically elected Dail which was to be suppressed in blood if its leaders did not accept partition. They did so, signing the Treaty in December.

Maxine Williams

Irish reward prisoners

Michael O'Brien and Paul Magee are currently on remand in Belmarsh prison facing conspiracy charges. They have been denied the right to association since August 1992. O'Brien has been denied the right to attend Mass, for fear he may meet Magee. He has also made complaints about the constant strip-searching he is subject to, including being strip-searched three times in one day. He is also unable to make telephone calls to his family in the 26 Counties of Ireland despite the phone box being outside his cell, as the phone calls are only permitted within Britain.

No public outcry

There has been no public outcry whatsoever about the sudden increasing presence of armed police roadblocks on the streets of London and Manchester. Presumably in the 'war against terrorism' anything goes. Is this really the 'decline in anti-Irish chauvinism' the RCP are proclaiming? The British government and its collaborators murdered 46 Irish civilians in the Six Counties last year alone. How long before they shoot the Irish on sight in London too?

Old Bailey trial

On 11 January, amid the now all too familiar hysterical security measures of walling streets and police marksmen on the rooves, another Irish 'terrorist' conspiracy trial began at the Old Bailey. Jimmy Carming and Audrey Lamb were arrested last summer, and deny charges of conspiring to cause explosions in April 1992, possession of explosives and firearms. Since her arrest Audrey has been held in Brixton prison, a male prison where the only women prisoners are category A status. It is notorious for the abuse of women prisoners by the use of strip-searching, exposed in the treatment of Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer in 1986. Jimmy is being held in Belmarsh prison where he was locked up for 23 hours a day before being transferred to the medical wing and denied association with the other category A remand prisoners for 'security reasons'. He has refused visits in protest. The trial is expected to last for five weeks.

Wendy Wilkinson

A little English history...

Ever since William the Conqueror landed on English soil and declared the land his own, English Kings and Queens have been ripping off their subjects. The assumption that these robbers are upright, moral or even normal is a comparatively modern illusion. For centuries the Royals broke the Ten Commandments routinely without arousing great controversy or, indeed, interest. From Henry VIII onwards, none had any scruple about becoming 'Defender of the Faith' whilst adulterating, murdering, stealing, falsely imprisoning and oppressing the general public. King Charles I's execution resulted less from his excessive conduct - in which he differed little from either his predecessors or successors - than from the rise of the bourgeoisie in England intent on ensuring its own freedom to rob the poor and assume privileges without interference from the Crown.

The historic compromise between Parliament and Crown in the 1690s - now with true wit called The Great Revolution - allowed Parliament to assume the major powers of the Crown (in particular collecting taxes) in exchange for the retention of some powers and wealth by the monarch - now called constitutional monarch in the absence of any written constitution. Europe was combed to find a suitable Protestant successor to the deposed Catholic James II who would agree the Deal. By the Act of Settlement 1700 which put William of Orange and Mary on the throne, the Crown shall 'remain and continue to the said most excellent Princess Sophia (the Electress of Hanover, grand-daughter of James I) and heirs of her body being Protestant'. Do not imagine that this guff is mere history. This and the succession of male heirs govern the Royals today and an essential ingredient is the myth that we need or desire the monarchy.

Subsequent Kings and Queens continued the tradition of badness and madness, with Victoria adding hypocrisy and expanding the murder and robbery across the face of the earth. Her offspring populated the Royal families of Europe and were sensibly annihilated by wars and revolutions shortly afterwards. The residual Hanoverian successors did not fare much better. By 1938 Edward VIII transgressed so far as to openly conduct an affair with an American twice-divorced in the fashionable watering holes of Europe while the British press loyally kept the secret. His abdication was only slightly delayed by the difficulty of choosing the next king from a bunch of dismal princes, one of whom was a drug addict.

Royal behaviour, however, has not principally been governed by faulty genes, lousy upbringing and excessive wealth. Victoria became Empress to give the stamp of authority to the British Empire. George VI portrayed as stalwart king was necessary for World War II. And Queen Elizabeth II and her progeny, became the models of moderation and family life to benefit a stable Parliamentary democracy where everyone knows their place and stays there. The Deal, first concluded in the 1690s, today still includes considerable private wealth, the Civil List, the maintenance of palaces, yachts and aircraft from the public purse, and powers to grant honours, dissolve Parliaments, appoint Prime Ministers and declare war. It also included, until very recently, exemption from taxation and

the tacit agreement that the poor would keep quiet in order to maintain the myth.

With the burning down of Windsor Castle and the marital antics of junior Royals, the Deal began to flake at the edges, following at the same time a furious war between press barons and Parliament on the issue of privacy. The press can sell papers on the basis of moronic phone conversations suitably dubbed Squidgy 1, Squidgy 2 and Tompongale - a speculation on which idiot would succeed to the throne. All without questioning the far more serious stupid institution of monarchy.



Edward VIII... the press kept silent

Real issues are being submerged. Photos of nude Pegggy Lonsdale with her lover surrounded by Scotland Yard detectives reading novels on sofas, and the publication of the phone conversations is condemned as 'dabbling in the stuff of people's souls'. Meanwhile Parliament passing legislation allowing single mothers to be grilled about their children's parentage with 20% cut in benefit if they refuse. This is not 'dabbling in the stuff of people's souls'. Politicians squabble about press freedom and issue writs when Mellor, Lamont and nameless others are exposed, but are only too happy to fuel pre-rumour-mongering when elections are in the offing. The press barons bleat about press freedom when they know they are up for hire. Illusions about the free press parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy are the very stuff of state power in Britain.

It may be that a series of lucky amateur scanners managed to lay the phone gibberings of the Prince and Princess. It may be that this was unfortunately accompanied by the leaking of the Calcutt report proposing strict checks on press freedom. On the other hand it may be that the new bourgeoisie - the traders and rich industrialists of the 18th and 19th centuries who honoured the constitutional compromise for so long, but the Thatcherite generation of greedy financiers and bankers - are tired of the Deal. The press now have the go-ahead to reveal the real cost of the Royal Yacht, Royal Flight and Royal Train. The Queen must pay taxes and reduce the List. Hang on. Above all the Royals must begin to know their place and suffer the consequences. If Charles is to become King he must abandon his quasi-liberal thinking, the Church is not to be disturbed, established must not abandon its 'Faith in the City' championing the poor. It may be that the Great Revolutionary Deal is being refashioned as the New Paradise and their supporters decide to get a bit more from the Old Paradise in these recessionary times.

from Our Royal Correspondent

Casement Park trials—travesty of justice

LILA PATEL

The Casement Park trials arose from the killing of two armed plain clothes British Army corporals during the 1988 funeral of Kevin Brady, a mourner who had been killed when a loyalist threw hand grenades and fired gunshots into the crowd at the funeral of the Gibraltar Three only three days before.

The Nationalist community at the time was already in turbulence following both the shooting of the Gibraltar Three and the attack on their funerals: when the two British corporals drove at high speed into the funeral cortege of Kevin Brady near Casement Sports Park, West Belfast they assumed it was another loyalist attack. This was backed up by the emergence from the car of a man in plain clothes carrying a gun. The soldiers were overpowered and disarmed, then taken to a wasteland where they were shot by the IRA. Republican funerals are routinely saturated with uniformed RUC and British military. On this occasion, they were absent and no satisfactory explanation was ever given for the presence of the corporals.

In the aftermath of the corporals' deaths the British press branded the people of West Belfast as savages. There has been very little coverage, however,

of the events that followed, which have punished and criminalised the entire community.

Two hundred mourners and spectators were arrested and questioned by the RUC. Forty-one people were charged. Twenty-one have been convicted.

Five men were sentenced to life imprisonment, although none were accused of the shootings. Three of them, Pat Kane, Michael Timmons and Sean Kelly were not even accused of being present at the scene. Their convictions were based on an alarming interpretation of the legal doctrine of 'common purpose' whereby guilt can be found even though the actions of the accused did not lead directly to the crime. This doctrine was similarly used in South Africa against the Sharpeville Six.

There is no right to silence in the Six Counties. Anyone who fails to answer questions on arrest or who does not give evidence at trial can have this fact used against them to imply guilt. One person who went along voluntarily to the police station, was then refused access to a solicitor, so decided to remain silent and was told this implied his guilt.

Many of the convictions rested on identification of the defendants from extremely poor quality 'heli-tele' film taken of the events from an army helicopter 1,000 feet above the funeral in which peoples' faces

are largely indistinguishable. The police have spent years looking at the videos to pick people out, who are then jailed. Some defendants were arrested over two years after the event.

Merely presence at the scene has been used to bring charges. One defendant was charged with instigating violence because he did not run away from the area.

In the eight trials which have been held so far the harassment of the community has continued. People were searched before entering court, and the defendants' families were searched twice. Armed RUC officers were present. The state was also anxious to keep publicity around the cases to a minimum, with the court aiming for quick trials and long sentences.

Due to the campaign by families and friends and the resultant international scrutiny of the trials, this approach has begun to come unstuck. The most recent trial, in December 1992, resulted in acquittals for six out of seven defendants and a suspended sentence for the seventh. As in previous trials, they had faced charges ranging from affray to murder.

The Casement Accused Relatives Committee continues its campaign to publicise the cases and to overturn the convictions. They can be contacted at 7 Conway Street, Falls Road, Belfast 12 or c/o Green Ink Books, Archway Mall, London N19. ■

★ Yes for Cuba

The new US President Clinton has announced his intention to destroy Cuba. The Cuban people remain firm in their resolve to defend their Revolution, as Andy Higginbottom and Jenny Sutton found during their visit to Havana in December.



★ Elections for People's Power

Last November, Cuba's National Assembly passed a new Electoral Law. The US government, the contra-revolutionaries and the British Labour Party all dismissed the law on the grounds that it did not provide for a multi-party system. The contras called a boycott. Thus the first stage of the process, the elections of 20 and 27 December for the Municipal Assemblies of People's Power, immediately became a referendum of support for Fidel Castro and the Communist Party government.

Neighbourhood Assemblies

Pedro Seuret is the President of the Electoral Commission in Lawton barrio, in the 10th of October municipality of Havana. He told us about his area.

The candidates were proposed at neighbourhood assemblies. First was a report back from the outgoing delegate who answered questions on her record, then the meeting was handed over to the people to propose candidates. There were five such local assemblies in Lawton. The second meeting had 380 participating. At least 800 of the 1,467 voters in this barrio attended the selection meetings.

The neighbourhood assemblies are the bedrock of participation in the electoral process, Pedro explained. 'Although it is a legal entitlement, people do not propose themselves as candidates. A possible candidate is nominated by somebody making a speech in their favour. Then we get other contributions so that the meeting gets a fuller picture, and then the nominee must agree to be nominated.'

Compare this with British elections, where secret cabals veto any candidate likely to challenge vested interests, where there are few open meetings and certainly no discussion (attendance at public meetings was less than 3% in the 1987 general elections; in 1992 there were hardly any real public meetings at all).

In Cuba, a candidate must simply be at least 18 years old and be on the register for the area. The Lawton assemblies nominated two women, one a member of the Communist Party and the other a member of the Young Communist League. By law there must be between two and eight candidates. Anybody, Communist Party or not, can stand. Pedro

stresses that to be in the Party should not give anyone special privileges. The Party expected its members to accept nomination as a duty, but candidates do not get specific party approval.

For Pedro, the election was about the people considering which candidate will be right for the job and will best serve the people. There is not the same self-promotion as in capitalist elections. Each candidate writes a summary of their life which the electoral commission displays on a single typed sheet, with a photograph, in public places in the neighbourhood. People can see, for instance, that a candidate volunteered and fought to defend the People's Republic of Angola. The candidates live locally, so can be questioned in person.

Electoral registration is thorough. The register is displayed for checking and correction. Almost every Cuban over 16 can vote. The few exceptions include people certified senile, those mentally incapacitated, and some categories of criminal. Young Pioneers are sent to the homes of physically disabled people to collect their secret ballots.

Popular participation

Polling day, 20 December, started at 4am for Pedro and his Commission members. Great care had been taken in choosing voting stations which provided conditions of secrecy and good access for that neighbourhood.

'I was surprised by the willingness of people to help. We had lots of volunteers, especially older people, who came to the voting stations from 6am to 6pm. They just wanted to be there to ensure it was fair. At 6pm the station officer had to mark the last person in line waiting to vote.'

The ballots are counted and double checked; the result was known by 9pm and was immediately posted up in the neighbourhood. The younger comrade was elected.

Had there been any complaints? 'Just one. Somebody thought it unfair that the sample ballot form posted up in one voting station had a bigger cross against one candidate's name. We checked the split of votes against the other stations and found no difference. The cross was only very slightly bigger anyway. So we carefully considered it, but could not accept the complaint. The result holds.'

In Lawton the voter turnout was below

the national average of 97.2%. We asked Pedro why. 'Look, this is downtown Havana. It's a very rough area with a low percentage of Party members. And yet we still got 89% of the people voting.'

In all, 13,432 delegates were elected to Municipal Assemblies. In those wards where no single candidate achieved 50% of the vote, a second round was held the following Sunday. A further 433 councillors were elected. All municipal delegates have a two and a half year term, during which time they are accountable.

'In my opinion the municipal elections were a success. The people did vote 'Yes for Cuba'. Now we are getting ready for the provincial elections in February. More work for me, but it will be interesting.'

The next phase

The next phase of the electoral process has already begun. Candidate commissions chaired by worker representatives, with representatives of women, university students, intermediate students and small farmers are drawing up lists of candidates to be delegates in the provincial assemblies and deputies to the National Assembly. Up to 50% of the candidates can be drawn from the elected municipal delegates. The candidate commissions will submit their nominees to the newly elected Municipal Assemblies which can reject any of the potential candidates. By these means there is democratic control of the candidate list which is put to the people.

Voting for the provincial and national assemblies will take place on 24 February by direct secret ballot. Nobody will be elected unless they receive a simple majority of the votes cast. Once again the vast majority of the voters will defy the US blockade by going to the polls.

Pedro emphasised that in a single party system it is vital that there is democracy within the Communist Party. We asked him to respond to Cuba's critics.

'Why are these people calling the tune of the US? You have to understand that we Cubans are not going to change our way of doing things, we are not going to sell our democracy for US dollars! We are not going to allow rich gangsters from Miami to come over here with lots of money, hold big election rallies and call that democracy! We are trying to do

Celebrations defy blockade

Havana December 1992. The streets are a workshop! ancient televisions, radios, fridges and fans are fixed on makeshift corner stalls, no piece of wiring or electrical component going to waste. Factories, open to the street, clatter and hum with hand-turned machinery. The cars are 1950s America, ramshackle old Chevrolets, invariably with an open bonnet or a pair of legs protruding from the underbelly. We see two Ladas, welded together in the Cuban version of the stretch limousine. Bicycles everywhere have sprung hybrid forms - trailers, side-cars, tricycles with car-boots - transformed by blow-torch and welder.

The streets are scruffy, the buildings in need of repair. Problems with the drains are obvious to the eye and to the nose. This is the Third World. And yet, the children are lithe and strong. The priorities of the revolution are obvious to anyone with an open eye and mind. Now 3, 4 or 5 households occupy what was once the home of a single privileged family. On every main street is a pharmacy, shelves lined with drugs bought with precious dollars or manufactured in Cuba. Down the street is the local library; inside, the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Jose Marti amongst others. The volumes are battered and yellow, but the shelves are full despite an acute paper shortage. Schoolchildren are neat in school uniform. Elias, 17, who has acted as our guide, remarks casually that yes, of course they have studied Shakespeare at school. And Hegel. And Dante.

You cannot miss the food queues. The blockade tightens its cruel noose, and the rations allow a frugal diet. Elias eats one full meal a day; rice and beans, paste, bread or eggs. Fish once a week, meat once a month, fruit and vegetables when available. Children used to get one litre of milk a day up until the age of 13; now it is until 7. It is hard for them to watch the tourists in the dollar-restaurants eating lobsters from Cuban waters but unavailable to Cubans: dollars buy vital imports.



SI POR CUBA

the best we can in the circumstances of the blockade. It is not perfect, but it is our way.'

Cuba's improved electoral process shows a serious attempt by the Communist Party to institutionalise popular participation in decision-making: it will strengthen the Revolution.

What a contrast to the USA, where money buys votes through the medium of prime time television, where the poor are excluded, where Money Bags millionaires compete for national office and the spin doctors decide. 'Democratic' USA?

The image of Che looks out from walls and buildings. On every block, a hand-written sign above a doorway spells 'Committee for the Defence of the Revolution'. People sport hats and T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan 'Si por Cuba!'. 'The Americans don't understand,' we are told, 'the Cuban people can suffer much, we are survivors, we will not give up.'

We go to La Plaza de la Revolucion. It is 2pm, 30 December, the day of the 'Si Por Cuba' concert, the culmination of a long campaign of popular mobilisation against the US blockade organised by the Young Communist League (UJC). The skies open in a tropical downpour, but the UJC have been up since before dawn, going to every corner of the city to mobilise the youth. And on foot and bicycle they come in their

Infant mortality record

Despite the double blockade, Cuba reduced its infant mortality rate from 10.7 per thousand live births in 1991 to 10.2 in 1992. This is the lowest rate in Latin America and compares with 68 in Peru, 55 in Brazil and 22 in Chile.

thousands. Heedless of the deluge, some dance to the music blasting from the speakers. Others huddle under the stalls selling chocolate biscuits, produced especially for today and a rare treat. 'Why "Yes for Cuba"?' we ask. 'Young people compete to tell us of the strength of their revolution and their contempt for the US'

By 8pm, the crowd has swelled to hundreds of thousands. Tonight the usual power cuts are suspended and the square is a blaze of lights. The excitement builds. Without announcement, Fidel Castro comes on to the platform, accompanied by Roberto Robaina, the First Secretary of the UJC, and other Central Committee members. A roar like a tidal wave rolls around the square. 'Fidel! Fidel! Fidel!' 'Si por Cuba! Si por Cuba!'. As even the BBC correspondent has to acknowledge, this is the equivalent of one million young British people cheering John Major in the rain in Trafalgar Square. Roberto Robaina speaks of the difficulties that Cuba has faced and those that lie ahead: 'Together, all the generations of Cubans have heroically surmounted a tremendous year. No one's smile, or optimism has faded, though we have had to tighten our belts... Together we will emerge from this situation. We'll save ourselves together, without anyone unemployed, without anyone destitute'. He speaks of the difficult challenges of the coming year, and voices the resolve of the Cuban people to face up to those difficulties without fear. 'Our "Yes for Cuba!" rally is the affirmation of the road we have chosen. The emotion in the square is as tangible as the rain. Si por Cuba!

Only those who command billions of dollars, and whom the billionaires command, can ever succeed to executive power in the White House.

Socialism removes the domination of wealth which makes all bourgeois professions of democracy a deceit. That is why the Cuban way is infinitely superior to anything that capitalism can offer the working class.

On the electoral front, as on every other front, we say:

Cuba sí! Yanqui no!



The gloved fist of imperialism

In its relentless thirst for profits, capitalism has grown into a worldwide system of economic and political domination of the overwhelming majority of the world by a small number of imperialist countries. Transnational corporations – enterprises operating in a number of different countries – have been in the forefront of this process, leaving no area of the world untouched by their drive to control markets and investment outlets and expand their profitable spheres of operation. A recent study by the United Nations, *World Investment Report 1992* (WIR) brings us up to date with this development.



The United Nations has been principally the mouthpiece of the strongest imperialist powers so it is no surprise that this very detailed study of transnational corporations is apologetic, rather than critical, in tone. The reassuring subtitle of the report, 'Transnational Corporations as Engines of Growth', shows an intention to reconcile the reader to the gruesome reality which imperialism holds, at least, for the vast majority of humanity. However, the wealth of statistics gathered together in this very detailed report allows us to reveal the real processes at work. These show not only the emergence of three competing imperialist power blocs – USA, Japan and the European Community (EC) – but also how the collapse of the socialist bloc has removed all barriers to imperialism's aggressive and expansionist drive.

TNCs and competing imperialist power blocs

Transnational corporations (TNCs) have become the principal vehicles of imperialism's drive to divide and redive the world according to the balance of economic power. And foreign direct investment (FDI) is now the central mechanism for doing this in an increasingly integrated world economy. Such investment implies control over economic activities through either majority or substantial minority ownership. The international capitalist production system is increasingly controlled and organised by TNCs.

In 1990 world-wide outflows of FDI reached an unprecedented \$225bn. The growth rate of FDI between 1985-1990 was 35% per year, far exceeding that of world exports (13%) and gross domestic product (12%). The estimated accumulated global stock of FDI is in the region of \$1.7 trillion. At the end of the 1980s the volume of goods and services sold by foreign affiliates of TNCs was \$4.4 trillion – almost double that of world exports (excluding intra-firm trade).

The total number of TNCs in 1990 exceeded 35,000 with more than 150,000 foreign affiliates. While about 90% of TNCs originate in the imperialist nations ('developed capitalist countries'), half of their foreign affiliates are in the oppressed nations ('developing countries'). The imperialist countries are responsible for nearly all worldwide investment outflows (Table 1) with the major powers, France, Germany, Japan, Britain and the USA alone accounting for 70% (Table 2) and for about half the number of TNCs. In individual countries a small number of TNCs account for the majority outward FDI. In West Germany the 50 largest TNCs, less than one per cent of the total, account for 60% of the accumulated outward investment stock. 350 TNCs in France accounted for 80% of outward FDI flows between 1981-1984.

In the 1980s, 75% to 83% of FDI outflows went to the imperialist countries. The share invested in the oppressed nations dropped in the latter half of the 1980s from 25% to 17% of the total, almost certainly due to the debt crisis facing those countries and the artificial mini-boom created in the imperialist nations.

The world recession since 1990 has now reversed this process. More recent statistics show that while FDI outflows fell in 1991 to \$177.3bn, the share of this total going to the oppressed nations increased to 27%. Faced with a rapid fall in profits in the major imperialist countries, transnational companies, in a desperate drive for new sources of profit, invested some \$42.7bn in the oppressed nations, a rise of 38% on the previous year. FDI in Latin America increased by over \$4bn (more than 50%) as the so-called liberalisation policies of these governments exposed already poverty-stricken people to yet further unparalleled plunder. Investment in Asia also increased by \$5.8bn (nearly 30%) as TNCs invested more in lower income nations

such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand and seized new opportunities in China and Vietnam. Finally, inflows to the ex-socialist bloc in Eastern Europe rose by \$1.8bn to \$2.3bn in 1991 a rise of 360%, although from a very small base.

Statistics for the FDI outflows from the five major imperialist powers reflect the changed balance of economic power since the 1970s and point to the emergence of three competing power blocs (Table 2). The economic decline of US imperialism is mirrored by the rise of Japanese imperialism. The main imperialist nations in the EC together have the dominant share with small changes in the distribution between Germany, France and Britain. The 1991 figures have been partly estimated and Japanese data for all years is an underestimate because they do not include reinvested earnings.

The *World Investment Report* does not give aggregate figures for FDI flows for the EC. Figures from the *BIS annual report* do and show the share of world direct investment outflows of the European Community rising slightly from 40.0% in 1975-79, to 44.0% in 1985-89 and 45.4% in 1991. The same data show that the US share rapidly declined from 45.0% in 1975-79, to 16.9% in 1985-89 and 16.6% in 1991. Japan's share rose sharply from 5.8% in 1975-79, to 17.6% in 1985-89, falling to 17.3% in 1991 due to the stock market crash and growing recession in Japan, having reached an all-time high of 21.6% in 1990. German FDI did not fall in 1991 when its share reached a high of 13.0% almost certainly as a result of its push into the ex-socialist bloc.

The accumulated stock of FDI reflects the weight of the long-standing export of capital from the oldest imperialist powers. In 1989 the EC held around 32% of this stock, with Britain holding 16%, W Germany 9% and France 5% of the world total. The United States held 27% (this figure is inconsistent with the amount of accumulated stock given

in the same table in WIR p16, which would put it slightly higher than the European Community) and Japan 11%. This changing balance of power can be seen by comparing this with the shares in 1971 when the United States held 52%, Britain 14.5%, France 5.8%, W Germany 4.4% and Japan 2.7%. The data also demonstrates what has been consistently argued in *FRFI*: that while Britain is certainly a rapidly declining industrial power, its transnational companies and banks have ensured it still retains a formidable imperialist presence.

FDI stocks and flows into the oppressed nations and ex-socialist bloc tend to come from one or more of the competing power blocs (WIR refers to these blocs as members of a Triad). And in the 1980s this clustering of FDI had become more pronounced with countries receiving FDI tending to be around a single Triad member located in the same geographical region. The United States is the dominant investor in Latin America with the exception of Brazil (EC) and also in a few Asian countries (Philippines, Pakistan and Bangladesh). Japan is rapidly consolidating its position in Asia recently adding Singapore and Taiwan to its cluster. Finally the EC continues as the dominant investor in the ex-socialist bloc, Africa and a few Asian countries (India, Sri Lanka and Vietnam) where its members have long-standing imperialist ties.

Japan's consolidation in Asia and the formation of regional trade and investment blocs in North America (Mexico, Canada and the United States in NAFTA) and Europe (EC and EFTA countries to form the ERA) has strengthened the trend towards three competing power blocs, with FDI flows following the pattern of rising intra-regional (within the same region) trade. Intra-regional trade in goods now accounts for 61%, 41%, and 35% of the total trade in goods in the EC, Asia and North America respectively. A great deal of this trade

is carried out by TNCs with a high proportion of it being intra-firm transactions. An estimated 25% of world-wide trade is intra-firm trade between TNCs, but it is much higher in many countries. Some 80% of US external trade (exports and imports) was carried out by TNCs with one-fifth of exports and two-fifths of imports being intra-firm transactions. For Japan and Britain intra-firm trade accounted for one-third of their international trade in the early 1980s. Finally intra-firm trade in royalties and licence fees accounts for over 80% of the total value of such transactions.

A world in their image

Economic viability and competitiveness is increasingly dependent on the acquisition of new technologies. That technology is almost totally in the hands of TNCs within the imperialist countries. 95% of strategic technology alliances were between firms in those countries during the 1980s. TNCs account for over three quarters of the patents registered in the United States. Following the collapse of the ex-socialist countries, TNCs have a stranglehold on the vast majority of nations, especially the ex-socialist countries and heavily indebted oppressed nations desperately needing capital investment to survive. FDI has become the principle source of foreign capital to oppressed nations rising from 30% of total long-term capital flows from private sources in 1981-85 to 74% from 1986-90.

That investment is available at a price and then only if high enough profits are to be made. More than two-thirds of FDI to the oppressed nations was concentrated in 10 countries usually with a developed infrastructure. A large proportion of production will be for export. In Malaysia foreign affiliates of TNCs accounted for over 50% of manufactured exports, in Mexico 58% and in Singapore as much as 90%.

In the case of Africa FDI fell to

\$2.2bn in 1990, a decrease of 50% on 1989. There is an increasing marginalisation of the region with devastating consequences for the people. Low income oppressed nations receive very little attention by TNCs. The rest have to open up their economies, 'to give a greater role to the private sector and market forces'.

The IMF and World Bank force privatisation and 'liberalisation' programmes on oppressed nations. 'Free-market' economic policies give TNCs the freedom to plunder and exploit economies as part of an overall global strategy. The annual number of privatisations world-wide increased fivefold between 1985 and 1990 to around 130. By the end of the 1980s the value of state-enterprises sold or reached over \$185bn, many in the oppressed nations, with no sign of the process slowing down. From 1991 to 1992, the number of joint ventures and wholly owned affiliates registered in the ex-socialist bloc doubled to more than 34,000 of which the foreign equity stake was \$9.4bn. Debt for equity swaps (handing over factories etc to reduce long-term debt) have been a crucial component of FDI flows in Chile, Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. 80% of all FDI flows into Chile (\$3.2bn), 59% of those into Brazil (\$4.5bn), 30% of those to Mexico (\$3.1bn) and 20% to Argentina (\$0.7bn) between 1985-89 have been through debt-equity swaps. In such ways is the world organised and moulded to the interests of the global profit making requirements of imperialist corporations.

Profits made in the oppressed nations are far higher than those made in the imperialist countries. Real profits, as opposed to those declared, are higher still once transfer pricing and various tax avoidance measures are taken into account. Recent statistics for Japanese FDI in manufacturing show a 5% return on sales in Asia, 3.2% in Europe and a loss of -0.9% in North America. Increased Japanese FDI in Asia is therefore to be expected with the very low wages in Vietnam (\$20 a month) an important attraction.

The employment effects of FDI are very limited. The number employed by the foreign affiliates of US TNCs remained unchanged at around 6.6m workers throughout the period 1982-89, while the worldwide assets of these affiliates grew by 78% and worldwide sales by 34%. Direct employment by TNCs in oppressed nations was estimated at 7 million in the mid-1980s, less than one per cent of the economically active population. Between 1.5 and 2 million people, including a large number of young unskilled or semi-skilled women, are employed in the more than 20 labour intensive 'export processing zones'. These are cheap labour zones for assembly of components and designed to increase the global profitability of TNCs at the smallest cost.

Overall the impact of the global policies of TNCs has been devastating both for the majority of the world's population and the environment. The next few years promise to be worse as world recession in the imperialist nations threatens to destroy some of the largest transnational companies. BCCI operated in 7 countries with over 400 offices and some 14,000 employees when it collapsed in a web of corruption in 1991. Some 1.3 million people were affected worldwide. As a result of its record loss of profits of \$4.97bn in 1992, IBM has announced 25,000 job losses worldwide. 40,000 jobs have already been lost in 1991. The world's largest company General Motors announced in December 1991 that it would close 21 plants and eliminate 74,000 jobs as a result of losing \$12bn in North America since 1990. Far from being 'Engines of Growth', transnational corporations are the instruments of a globally integrated, crisis-ridden, capitalist system which have no answers to the problems facing the vast majority of humanity.

David Ross

Table 1: Inflows and outflows of foreign direct investment, 1988-90

Country group	1988	1989	1990	1988-89	1989-90
	(\$ billion)			(share in total)	
Imperialist: Inflows	84	129	162	75%	83%
Outflows	86	161	217	98%	97%
Oppressed: Inflows	14	30	32	25%	17%
Outflows	2	8	8	2%	3%

(data collecting difficulties are responsible for discrepancies between outflows and inflows, with the former more reliable)

Table 2: Outflows of FDI from five major imperialist powers 1986-1990

Country	1986	1988	1990	1991	1986-89	1989-90
	(Outflows \$ billion)				Share in total	
France	5	15	35	21	6%	10%
W Germany	10	11	23	23	8%	8%
Japan	15	34	48	31	10%	20%
Britain	18	37	21	18	20%	17%
United States	14	14	29	29	26%	14%

nism, entalism question tine

...ly or not, contributed
...e the Intifada.
...ve nationalists are
...ed their eyes
...l unity, whereas
...as.'

estine

...buted to the Israeli occupation's ef-
...fort to undermine the Intifada. And
...here Palestinian leftists and other
...progressive nationalists are partial-
...ly to blame, for they somehow clos-
...ed their eyes to what was happen-
...ing in the name of national unity,
...whereas they should have stood up
...to Hamas.'

Hamas - an anti-communist terror squad

The left's and progressive national-
...ists' toleration of Hamas was a terri-
...ble mistake. The Muslim Brother-
...hood and Hamas reserve their vilest
...venom for the left. A Hamas slogan
...makes the organisations purpose
...clear: 'Communism is a cancer inside
...the nation's body; we will cut it out.'
...For these reasons such movements
...have for decades been nurtured and
...financed by the ruling class in its
...struggle against communism, Marx-
...ism and popular democracy in the
...Middle East. In Egypt and in Syria,
...the fundamentalists were used to op-
...pose strong working class and com-
...munist organisations. In the Palesti-
...nian arena, both Zionism and Arab
...reaction, while attacking the Palesti-
...nian and Arab left, financed and
...facilitated the growth of fundamen-
...talism. Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari,
...in their book *Intifada - Israel's Third
...Front*, comment:

'... the Civil Administration has
...contributed considerably to the
...development of the Muslim groups
... Many Israeli staff officers be-
...lieved that the rise of fundamen-
...talism... could be exploited to
...weaken the power of the PLO...'
...For the better part of a decade, the
...Israelis had allowed fundamen-
...talist Muslims to move into posi-
...tions of power in the religious
...establishment.'

Imam Barham writing in *Middle East
...International* (8 January 1993) notes:

'The Israelis pumped millions of
...dollars into the Muslim coffers as
...part of their grand design to cir-
...cumvent the PLO at any conceiv-
...able price.'

But the Muslim Brotherhood's major
...financier was the pro-US Saudi re-
...gime notorious for its bankrolling of
...the fascist Mojahedin in Afghanistan,
...its support for the US war against Iraq
...and its support for counter-revolution-
...ary forces in the Arab world.



Palestinian supporters of Hamas exiled to No-Man's Land

While it abstained from participation
...in the national struggle, with Saudi
...funding the Muslim Brotherhood
...built a vast network of support
...through Islamic endowments and the
...welfare organisations, societies, uni-
...versities and mosques it controlled.

With Saudi money and Zionist
...licence, the Brotherhood launched a
...civil war against the democratic and
...particularly Marxist and left-wing
...forces in Palestine. A few examples
...demonstrate this. In January 1980
...they attacked and severely damaged
...the Palestinian Red Crescent offices
...in Gaza claiming it was dominated by
...communists. In 1982 they did so
...again, attacking twice. In 1981 Dr
...Mohammad Hassan Sawalha was
...thrown out of a third floor window of
...Al Naja University because he was a
...left-winger. In 1983 fundamentalists
...launched attacks on leftists and na-
...tionalists in the Universities of Bir
...Zeit and Gaza. In 1984 they dispersed
...a demonstration in Al Bireh refugee
...camp claiming it was supported by
...the 'atheist left'. In the Gaza Strip
...PFLP and Palestine Communist Party
...members have been subjected to acid
...and razor attacks. Violence against
...PLO supporters continued into June
...1992 when fundamentalists tried to
...drive PLO supporters off the streets in
...Gaza.

The class character and social and economic basis of fundamentalism

How have such reactionaries won the
...loyalty of large sections of the
...poor and oppressed - not only in
...Palestine but in large parts of the Arab
...world? An answer is offered by *Dem-
...ocratic Palestine*. The rise of funda-
...mentalism is a:

'reaction to the failure of the Arab
...regimes to achieve the goals and
...aspirations of the Arab peoples,
...most importantly national libera-
...tion and social progress... It is
...equally a reaction to the inability of
...the secular opposition... to con-
...stitute a real alternative in terms of
...achieving these goals.'

In the Arab world, as in other parts of
...the Third World, imperialist domi-
...nated capitalist development has
...generated a terrible social polarisa-
...tion. A tiny post-colonial ruling
...class, allied to imperialism and
...steeped in corruption and crime,
...lives in unbelievable luxury. In sharp
...contrast are the devastated lives and
...shattered hopes of the poor and ex-
...ploited: the working class, the un-
...employed, under-employed, the city
...dwellers forced off the land and now
...living in hopeless urban squalor and

a huge and impoverished petit-
...bourgeoisie. The central issue of the
...class struggle has revolved around
...the question of who was to organise
...the poor and impoverished? Would it
...be the ruling class in alliance with the
...fundamentalists or the powerful
...communist forces based within the
...small working classes?

For decades the Arab ruling class
...spared no violence to defeat commu-
...nist and working class organisations
...whose membership was banned, im-
...prisoned, executed and massacred.
...Parallel to repression, Gulf oil money
...funded the fundamentalists to or-
...ganise among the poor and oppressed
...and undermine the appeal of social-
...ism, democracy and secularism. In
...the absence of state welfare provi-
...sion, fundamentalist organisations
...posed as alternative welfare provid-
...ers. But at a price: provision of some
...cheap services in return for support-
...ing fundamentalism, passivity in the
...class struggle and abandonment of
...communism. This assault, facilitated
...by the widespread opportunism
...within the Communist Parties, suc-
...ceeded in severely weakening the left
...in the Arab world.

Within the Palestinian context
...Zionism and the Arab ruling classes
...waged a similar struggle to debilitate
...the left and revolutionary nationalist
...currents. In September 1970, King
...Hussein's army suppressed a mass
...insurrection and drove the PLO out of
...Jordan. In 1976 Assad's Syrian re-
...gime used its army to save the
...Lebanese fascist falange from defeat
...at the hands of a joint democratic and
...leftist Lebanese/Palestinian alliance.
...The same forces were used to stifle a
...resurgent alliance in 1984. These
...repeated assaults severely weakened
...the position of the left and revolu-
...tionary nationalist forces.

As a result the dominant, bour-
...geois faction of the PLO increasingly
...tied its fortunes to the Arab ruling
...class and abandoned the revolu-
...tionary struggle. In return it hoped
...that imperialism would reward it by
...pressurising Zionism into a com-
...promise settlement. The dominant
...PLO leadership, representing a sub-
...stantial Palestinian bourgeoisie -
...both inside and outside Palestine,
...underwent a process of degeneration,
...developing an anti-democratic,
...bureaucratic stratum. Its privileged
...existence decisively separated it off
...from the lives and experience of the
...majority of the Palestinian poor and
...exploited. The current 'peace pro-
...cess' which has produced nothing for
...the Palestinians has accelerated
...popular disillusionment with the
...PLO. Such developments have pro-
...vided fertile ground for the fun-
...damentalists. As against the PLO it
...has enabled them to pose as defend-
...ers of the poor and oppressed. Their
...rhetoric of total opposition to Israel
...and to any negotiations with the
...Israelis is winning them growing
...support from a population which has
...no faith in the bourgeois course of

appearing Zionism and imperialism
...chosen by the PLO leadership.

The collapse of the socialist bloc
...and the retreat of the anti-imperialist
...movement internationally has also
...enormously benefited the fundamen-
...talists. The Palestinian people, aban-
...doned first by the Arab bourgeoisie
...and imperialism, now find them-
...selves internationally more isolated
...than ever from the world working
...class and peasantry. Their economic
...and material conditions continue to
...deteriorate as a result of the interna-
...tional recession, the consequences of
...the Gulf War and the crippling effect
...of Zionist colonisation. Such cir-
...cumstances strengthen the appeal of
...Islamic populism, apparently more
...radical and promising than a Soviet
...socialist experiment that failed.

However Hamas's vociferous de-
...nunciation of the PLO and its radical
...rhetoric is designed only to lull the
...people whilst it negotiates a better
...position for itself at the table of the
...privileged. Whilst its street slogans
...denounce 'autonomy', its respected
...leaders, such as Dr Mahmoud al-
...Zahar states that 'The Islamic move-
...ment is ready to enter into negotia-
...tions concerning autonomy for the
...Palestinians'. While condemning the
...PLO, Hamas is demanding 45% re-
...presentation in its institutions as a
...condition for joining it. The recent
...crisis over the deportation of Hamas
...supporters has in fact driven the PLO
...leadership and the Muslim Brother-
...hood leadership even closer.

The immediate future suggests no
...rapid defeat of fundamentalist forces
...by communist or progressive move-
...ments. However, the left of the Palesti-
...nian liberation movement is work-
...ing ardently to win over Hamas's
...impoverished supporters. As the
...class struggle unfolds, life itself will
...prove that fundamentalism is in-
...capable of resolving any of the prob-
...lems facing the Palestinian and
...Arab people. The mass movement
...will then pass its own ruthless judg-
...ment and sentence upon a movement
...which has caused so much damage to
...the cause of national and social
...liberation. They will return more
...vigorously to defend and develop
...their own independent organisa-
...tions. To do this they will turn to
...those forces within the Arab, Palesti-
...nian and international movement
...who are guided by science, by ra-
...tionalism, by democracy - in other
...words by scientific socialism, by
...communism, by the heritage of Marx-
...ism and Leninism. The collapse of
...the socialist bloc may have been a
...body blow to such forces, but they ex-
...ist and are continuing their struggle
...for socialism and progress. ■

This article will be discussed on **Tuesday
16th February** at 7.30pm above the Advice
Centre, Greenland Road, Camden Town
London NW1. (Camden Town tube) The
speaker will be the author, Eddie Abra-
hams. All welcome.

New Colonialism in action

The 17 December 1992 US/UN invasion of Somalia and the bombing of Iraq by US, British and French aircraft between 13-18 January this year are harbingers of a new post-cold war colonialism. Assailed by a profound economic crisis and deepening inter-imperialist rivalries, the Great Powers, today led by the USA, are again seeking to subjugate, divide and politically control parts of the Third World which have strategic significance for their financial and industrial conglomerates. The collapse of the USSR has removed a major restraint upon these ambitions. EDDIE ABRAHAMS examines Imperialist ambitions in Somalia and the Middle East.



by the US. They have since signed a ceasefire agreement and are preparing to set up a joint police force in Mogadishu.

If a dependent and subservient state is formed the US could command a potential bulwark against instability and fundamentalism. From Somali sea and air bases it can project its power across the region right up to Iran, a current target for imperialist aggression. Somalia also has a commanding position over sea routes throughout the Gulf, East and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean. Somalia also offers prospects for profitable investments. Many major US oil giants are currently engaged in exploration for oil and gas. Furthermore the country's strategic position would enable the US to extend its influence throughout Central and East Africa. This would be a great advantage in the US's contest with other imperialist powers for influence there. The region offers, according to Californian investment banker Daniel Montana:

'immediate prospects for profitable investments. Everything is in place - a legal system, basic transportation and communications... this infrastructure will not be ready in most of Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union for 5-10 years.'

The value of US influence in Africa was reflected by former US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa who claimed: 'Even though it is very far away and relatively unknown, news is spreading that you can do business in Africa.' This is the objective reality behind the hypocritical garbage about helping to save starving Somalis. Tens of thousands of Somalis have been dying since January 1991. But only in September 1992 did the US begin to send in food. To legitimise the invasion as a humanitarian operation, the US and its allies systematically exaggerated the scale of

famine and the extent of banditry and anarchy. Famine did destroy up to 200,000 lives. But it did not reach the 500,000 bandied about in the press and was to a great extent concentrated in the south. Most food was not looted. Save the Children Fund for example distributed 4,000 tons of grain without losing a single bag. Most aid agencies suffered losses of only 2-10 per cent because they collaborated with clan elders in distributing food. The UN suffered most because it refused to do so.

By the time US troops arrived the worst of the famine was over. The most vulnerable of the drought victims - children and the old - were already dead. According to Rakiya Omar, who was sacked as director for Africa Watch for opposing the US invasion, 'the famine is waning' and 'markets in all the main towns are awash with cheap food'.

Famine there still is. But its roots lie not in Somali banditry and anarchy but in colonial domination of the country's economy. With a population of 5-6 million, Somalia has water and range land able to service 4m cattle and 5.5m camels. It is potentially self-sufficient in livestock and grains. But British and Italian colonial domination - which only ended in 1961 - forced the local population to abandon subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry for cash crops such as bananas and sugar. Cheap 'food aid' also helped destroy local grain production. The result has been deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion and desertification, abject poverty, famine and death. Somalia has a GNP of \$210, female literacy is 16 per cent and infant mortality 116 per 1,000 live births.

The continued destruction of Iraq

Parallel with the experiment of re-colonisation in Somalia, the Great

Powers with unbridled ruthlessness and cynicism are continuing the work of destroying Iraq - once the most powerful of Arab states and a potential obstacle to imperialist domination of the region. The 13-18 January air and cruise missile attacks on Iraq were extensions of the January 1991 Gulf War. More precisely they were conducted to enforce the essentially colonial arrangements imperialism has imposed since the Gulf War.

By means of bombs and destruction, the Great Powers demand that Iraq accept the UN's transfer of parts of oil rich border territory to Kuwait and that it also accepts a limitation of Iraqi jurisdiction in the imperialist imposed 'exclusion zones'. The raids were precipitated by Iraq's challenge to these colonial dictates: it had moved troops into UN-seized territory to take control of its own arms depots, it moved missiles into the southern exclusion zone and attempted to control the movement of UN arms monitors.

With its current military assaults and over two years of economic sanctions, imperialism intends that Iraq's economy shall not be reconstructed. Under the guise of destroying military targets, US and British bombers also destroyed industrial installations near Baghdad which even their own monitors stated served no military purposes. In 1991 imperialism devastated the country, murdered 150,000 people and in the words of a UN report 'relegated the country to a pre-industrial age'. Its economic infrastructure was destroyed: roads, railways, bridges, ports, water and sanitation facilities. An Iraq of this order will be less resistant to imperial dictates.

These attacks have nothing to do with 'international law', 'humanitarianism' or 'ending Saddam's torture of his own people'. Former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark con-

demning the current bombings as a 'criminal act' went on to say that:

'there are 4-5,000 Iraqi children dying each month as a result of the destruction of water and sanitation facilities from the last US bombings.'

Such is the barbarism so evident behind all the stinking democratic rhetoric we hear. Yet in the name of 'humanitarianism' and a 'new internationalism' the Labour Party and a host of one time anti-imperialists have vociferously endorsed the invasion of Somalia and the destruction of Iraq. These people are part of the imperialist system. They are servants whose purpose is to provide the 'humanitarian' and 'internationalist' arguments to cover the murderous act.

A new invasion is prepared

Beyond the destruction of Iraq, imperialism is preparing to attack Iran. Robert Fisk writing in the *Independent* notes that:

'Washington has sounded the alarm that Iran is once more a threat to the Gulf and is buying up weapons of mass destruction and computer technology to dominate the oil rich, pro-American Arab Gulf states.'

Iran is being charged with orchestrating fundamentalists in Egypt who have conducted armed attacks on tourists. It is accused of subsidising fundamentalists throughout the Arab world and of encouraging Hamas to kill Israelis in return for massive cash donations.

As a preliminary to attacking Iran, the US is supplying vast quantities of arms to client states. In the past two years \$28 billion worth were sold in the Middle East. In 1992 Saudi Arabia planned to purchase a staggering \$17bn worth of arms, while Kuwait is purchasing 236 tanks at \$1bn. Meanwhile annual military funding of Israel continues to the tune of \$3-4bn. In October 1992, the US Congress passed an act tightening trade restrictions against Iran and in November it called on the G7 to refuse Iranian orders for dual-use technology. Meanwhile countries like Russia, Korea, Argentina are being urged to halt arms sales to Iran.

But in its assault on Iran, the US is confronting Great Power opposition. For their common benefit they permitted the US to tame Iraq and experiment in Somalia. But Germany and Japan in particular do not want to see oil-rich Iran totally subordinated to the US. They are not willing to permit the US total control of Middle East oil upon which they are too dependent. Furthermore, compared to the US, they have greater commercial interests in Iran. In 1992 Japan exported \$2.5bn to Iran and Germany \$5bn. Explaining why Japan refuses to impose a technology embargo on Iraq, Japan's Foreign Minister said: 'Our ties with Iran go a long way back and are different from US-Iran relations.'

Herein lie the seeds of new inter-imperialist wars. As the Great Powers prepare once more to carve up the world, they will, like a pack of hyenas, fight viciously for their own choice portions. Wars against the Third World will be followed by wars between the hyenas. Millions will be slaughtered on the altar of capitalist industry, trade and profit. This is what the new colonialism holds out for the international working class movement. Truly there is one choice: between socialism or barbarism. For all those who stand for progress, for civilisation, for human dignity and justice it is time to stand up and say: No more! ■

This article will be discussed on Tuesday 16 March at 7.30pm, above the Advice Centre, Greenland Road, Camden Town NW1, London (nearest tube: Camden Town). The speaker will be Trevor Rayne. All welcome.

That the Middle East, Gulf and Red Sea region is the testing ground for new experiments in colonialism is no accident. The area has enormous economic and military importance. Disputes over control of the area could aggravate contradictions between imperialist powers. For control of the region secures control not only of 66.3 per cent of world oil reserves but also a great deal of influence on the economies of Europe and Japan, both heavily dependent on Gulf oil.

The United States is therefore determined to remain top-dog here. Until the 1979 Iranian revolution its interests were served by an alliance with the ruling classes of Iran, under the Shah, Saudi Arabia and Israel. In 1979 Iran's place in the triangle was taken by Egypt. Today this edifice of control is increasingly shaky. Imperialist domination has destroyed the social and economic fabric of the Arab world whose ruling class stands discredited. The tide of fundamentalism sweeping from Iran has reached Sudan, Tunisia, Algeria and is now threatening a beleaguered Egypt. Zionism does remain a formidable power. But a weakening US economy is finding it too expensive to sustain. Furthermore, it is challenged by the Palestinian Intifada which shows no sign of demise.

The US establishment is therefore considering new tactics and strategies of domination. Edward Perkins, US ambassador to the UN stated that the US invasion of Somalia was: '... an important step in developing a strategy for dealing with the potential disorders and conflicts of the post-cold war world.' He added that the world 'is likely to hold other Somalias in store for us.'

The Somali experiment

24,000 US troops, supported by 10,000 more from 21 other countries, are now in effective control of Somalia. Acting like the colonial force they are, the US troops are conducting house-to-house searches, and raiding markets and warehouses, allegedly in search of weapons. Many Somalis are being killed in the process. On 15 January, for example, four civilians were shot dead when US troops opened fire on a farm truck allegedly transporting 'bandits'. The US intends to test the possibility of reconstructing Somalia as a protectorate under US/UN tutelage. An official from the previous Bush administration argued that:

'Somalia has no government. It needs some kind of structure... You may need a UN protectorate, which the UN would manage and then try and turn back into a state.'

In its current exercise, the US has lessons from the recent past. In 1977 it began financing and arming the now defunct Siad Barre regime as an outpost against the Ethiopian revolution. Over the next decade it supplied the Somali ruling class with over \$900m. In return the US took possession of a Soviet-built air and naval base at Berbera which became the staging post for the Rapid Deployment Force capable of striking Khmeini's Iran. An indication of the US's long term designs for Somalia was its embassy: one of its largest and most opulent, built at a cost of over \$35m.

Today, with the crisis in the Arab world, the US calculates that rebuilding Somalia is economically and politically relatively inexpensive. In a country exhausted and impoverished by war and famine it does not require a vast sum to buy the loyalty of the ruling class and the gratitude of a portion of the population. By 4-5 January, General Aideed and Ali Mahdi, who united to overthrow Siad Barre in January 1991 but then waged war for the spoils, were forced to the conference table along with a dozen other factional groupings. These ruling class factions, responsible for much of the war and devastation are now being groomed

A new party is born

Over the weekend of 28/29 November in Istanbul, Revolutionary Communist Group comrades participated in a public rally and international symposium to celebrate the birth of a new revolutionary party, the *Sosyalist Türkiye Partisi* (Party for a Socialist Turkey). The launch was a great success. The STP's formation marks the renewal of the socialist movement in Turkey, and will contribute to the regeneration of Marxism-Leninism as an international trend. ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM reports.

International co-operation

For a year the RCG had been cooperating with comrades from the pro-STP newspaper *İktidar*, to promote an international framework of discussion among communists and anti-imperialists.

Our joint document 'To Those Communists Who Will Not Surrender' invited all the principled movements, parties, organisations, factions and independent socialists to work together to build an international network (see 'Facing the future' Editorial to *FRFI* 107).

The STP's invitation was therefore a welcome opportunity to develop our political collaboration.

A new period for the Turkish

In Turkey the formation of an open legal party following Marxist-Leninist principles is itself a major breakthrough. Ever since the military coup on 12 September 1980 the capitalist state has used terror to smash political organisation of the working class. The STP has been created through years of courageous preparatory work.

Even today, 'legal' carries a highly qualified meaning in Turkey. The STP's founding members had to sign 147 different forms and visit the Interior Ministry up to 8 times. All membership and financial records must be made available to the political police. The names of speakers at public events have to be provided in advance.

The police try and control what the party is doing, as we were to see at first hand.

During our few days in Istanbul there were protests demanding the return of 14 students who have disappeared, and against state repression in Kurdistan. 100 students were detained. We visited the *Özgür Gündem* daily newspaper where we met Burhan Karadeniz, a young journalist, now in a wheelchair after surviving a death squad attack.

The STP proclaimed its existence by thousands of posters all over Istanbul. The police had arrested 35 comrades, beating up many. Metin Culhaoglu, the STP's Education Secretary, was held for 3 days. Undeterred, the STP pressed ahead.

Rallying to the banner of

700 banner-waving militants packed into a cinema-sized hall, cheered as STP President Ali Onat Onat greeted the opening rally. Their mood was exultant. 'Socialist Turkey! - Socialist Kurdistan! Victory to Our Party! Soviet Power!' they chanted. Comrade Onat stated his party's support for Kurdish self-determination for which he risked arrest and torture.

The STP has from its inception given material and political assistance to socialist Cuba. Comrade Jorge Castro, representative of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, had flown from Havana to welcome the new party's formation.

There were solidarity messages from the Russian Communist Workers Party and the Greek Communist Party, speeches by Bill Doares from the World Workers Party (USA) and Andy Higginbottom (RCG).

Then revolutionary music earthy



Ken Hughes, RCG



Metin Culhaoglu, STP

'Now there is room to leave behind certain old prejudices. Although some people think that we can create a new theoretical tradition by taking the average of several lines - a bit of Rosa Luxemburg, a bit of Trotskyism, a bit of Marxism-Leninism etc - this is not the right way.'

The universal principles of Marxism-Leninism must be applied to create the theory of socialist revolution in Turkey. But this theoretical task is not limited to an intellectual effort. It must be the product of practical political activity.'

Metin Culhaoglu, STP

haunting Tayfun Sevar, Angel Quintero fresh, vibrant from Cuba, and the RCG's own Ken Hughes who had the hall rocking to 'Amazon' and 'Power to the People'.

All this was too much for the political police, seated at a table near the front. You might think they were a minutes committee ever so busy taking notes. Except that they looked like plain clothes police, and they slouched like police. And then they bullied like police to try and stop the rally. Permission only runs to 11pm, they said. We have 30 riot equipped men waiting outside - and cannot be held responsible for what might happen next, they said.

In the meantime Azmi Toguzata with the voice of a Middle Eastern opera singer that could fill 10 cinemas was rousing the audience. The police threats cut short his set, but not before he gave a chorus of his hall-mark song. The song that he always ends on. Despite the police the rally ended on a defiant note.

Politics at a turning point

The International Symposium took reports analysing the situation in the

by its position as a declining imperialist power. Politically the Labour Party was formed to stave off decline in the privileged position enjoyed by an aristocratic section of the working class.

Thatcher's reign ended in a crisis of confidence in the British ruling class, which is still the dominant factor in politics. The resistance from below to Thatcher has not been consolidated into a socialist movement, but many pointers emerged to indicate the new forms of working class organisation that will be necessary. The RCG is preparing for this new period.

Bill Doares likened US imperialism to a vampire, a creature that should be dead but carries on by sucking the blood of the living. His party emphasises anti-imperialism and bases itself on the multi-national character of the working class in the US. He predicted a new period of instability following on the LA uprising. 'Los Angeles is the future of America'.

Jorge Castro emphasised that US aggression has strengthened the political unity of his people behind the leadership of Fidel Castro and the Communist Party.

'We assure you that Cuba will not abandon socialism nor its solidarity with communists in every corner of the world.'

Jorge Castro, Cuban Communist Party

He gave a realistic assessment of Cuba's economic position. 'Cuba has been left in a very difficult situation, with near zero rate of growth. However despite all our difficulties our standard of living in Cuba is higher than in all Third World countries. The child mortality rate is lower in Havana than in Washington DC. Socialism has achieved this.'

Points of agreement

Co-ordinating solidarity with socialist Cuba was the first point of agreement between the delegations. From 1 January to 26 July the parties will conduct petitioning campaigns demanding that President Clinton and the US blockade.

Our second major point of agreement was to investigate the viability of an international journal, which would be theoretical and provide an information exchange. Various technical problems were identified. It was recognised that such a project needs thorough political preparation involving comrades from many more countries.

The RCG is proud to have participated in the celebrations for the birth of the STP. The STP represents a new Marxist-Leninist trend in Turkish politics, and we are confident that its direct appeal will find a response amongst the working class in Turkey.

'Imperialism must fall by the conjunction of movements inside the oppressor and oppressed nations... We have very different starting points, but we share the same tradition, and we share the same goal.'

Andy Higginbottom
Revolutionary Communist Group

Revolutionary paper suspended

On 16 January the revolutionary pro-Kurdish Istanbul daily *Özgür Gündem* (Free Agenda) suspended publication 'for a time'. *Özgür Gündem* began life on 30 May 1992 within 10 days one of its journalists, Hafis Akdemir, was murdered by contra-guerrilla death squads on his way to work in the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir. By the end of September, *Gündem* had lost four of its writers, gunned down by unknown persons' as the official announcements express it, including the grand old man of the Kurdish renaissance in Turkey, Musa Anter, who was 74 years old. Why had *Gündem* brought down the wrath of the Turkish state? Because for the first time in the 70-year history of the republic a daily newspaper had dared to oppose the official line on the Kurdish question. *Özgür Gündem* was telling the Turkish people the reality of state oppression and atrocities perpetrated in the war in Kurdistan.

At meetings of the National Security Council the real power in Turkey decisions were taken to crack down on opposition. At the September meeting it was stated that 'some mass organisations and organs of the mass media which owe their existence to the democratic regime have been involved in activities which violate the unity of the country and the unitary structure of the state.' This was interpreted as a threat to *Gündem* and other revolutionary publications. Thus in November the contra-guerrillas began to obstruct the distribution of *Özgür Gündem* in Kurdistan by burning distribution vehicles and threatening newsagents. On 21 November a volunteer distributor in Batman Halil Adanir, was burnt alive in his car. The distribution of *Gündem* and various left-wing weeklies in Kurdistan became impossible. Paper boys as young as 10 were beaten up and warned not to distribute it. As a result the newspaper's proprietor, Yashar Kaya, announced that the paper was losing 10-15 000 in sales and over £2,000 a day. The paper decided to suspend publication temporarily to reorganise.

The absence of *Özgür Gündem* from the streets will be sorely missed as Turkish progressives and Kurdish people had become accustomed to 'their' daily, the people's daily. Their fervent wish is for *Gündem* to return as soon as possible to the fray. Alan Greaves

Armed struggle and negotiations

The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the imposition of a 'new world order' under the hegemony of the USA has resulted in severe military and political setbacks for the anti-imperialist movement worldwide. In El Salvador and South Africa, in Ireland, Palestine and elsewhere, peace settlements and 'negotiations' are being urged as the only way forward. In reality, these talks have little to do with peace, and everything to do with imperialism's efforts to destroy popular movements, and resolve these conflicts in its own interests.

Bourgeois ideologues today characterise armed struggle - whether it be the grenade attacks of the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) in South Africa, or the IRA's bombs, as 'outmoded extremism', a dangerous relic, of the past that threatens the moderate 'civilised' path represented by negotiations. Yet what is the reality? The Peace Settlement in El Salvador has already been reneged on by the right-wing regime, and today the FMLN is divided between those who argue that talks must at all costs be preserved and those who call for a return to armed struggle against the continuing poverty, hunger and repression. The Codesa talks in South Africa take place against a backdrop of unprecedented bloodshed, backed by the racist regime - and, if carried through, can only at this stage enshrine white minority rule. Those who today are exchanging the armed struggle for negotiations find themselves having to make concessions to imperialism for little return. As Benny Alexander, Press Secretary of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) commented in relation to Codesa, 'You win the war to negotiate; you do not negotiate to win the war'.

The response of the British left

'It is not enough to take sides on the question of political slogans: it is also necessary to take sides on the question of an armed uprising. Those who are opposed to it, those who do not prepare for it, must be ruthlessly dismissed from the ranks of the supporters of the revolution, sent packing to its enemies, to the traitors or cowards: for the day is approaching when the force of events and the conditions of the struggle will compel us to distinguish between enemies and friends according to this principle' (V.I. Lenin, 'Lessons of the Moscow Uprising', *Collected Works*, Vol. 11).

As bombs exploded all over London through November and December, causing millions of pounds worth of damage and chaos and leaving the British police chasing their own tails, the response of the Socialist Workers Party was to attack the IRA campaign as 'undefensible' and 'no service to the fight against Britain's presence in Ireland'. (*Socialist Worker* November 1992) and 'a disaster waiting to happen' (*Socialist Review*, January 1993). The timing they argued, was particularly unfortunate, since the British working class was moving into struggle and 'a generalised hatred of the Tories may grow to include a hatred of their treatment of Northern Ireland.' (*Socialist Review*, January 1993).

In 1982, *Socialist Worker* complained that the IRA's campaign then distracted British workers from fighting against Thatcher's callous policies. *Plus ça change...* 11 years later, British troops still terrorise the streets of Belfast, and still the SWP have the gall to ask the Irish people to postpone their struggle in favour of a British movement which has stood by or even applauded while the British state has pursued its brutal war against the Irish people through shoot-to-kill policies, torture, raids and terror and made permanent the vicious anti-Irish PTA in the Republic.

Communism and armed struggle

The current IRA mainland bombing campaign, and the response to it of sections of the British left, has raised again the question of the role, and the legitimacy, of armed struggle within liberation and socialist movements. CAT WIENER examines some of the issues.



'Why does the guerrilla fighter fight? We must come to the inevitable conclusion that the guerrilla fighter is a social reformer, that he takes up arms responding to the angry protest of the people against their oppressors, and that he fights in order to change the social system that keeps all his unarmed brothers in ignominy and misery.'
(Che Guevara, in his eminently practical handbook, *Guerrilla warfare*)



TOP: Irish fighters; ABOVE: IRA volunteer

selves of Lenin's dictum that 'a proletariat that tolerates the slightest coercion of other nations by its "own" nation cannot be a socialist proletarian'. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 21)

The RCP, on the other hand, for many years claimed that support for armed struggle was the only means of offering solidarity to the Irish movement: their slogan was 'Bring the war to Britain', and they eschewed campaigns around prisoners, civil rights, plastic bullets and strip-searching as fit only for political wimps and liberals. Today, however, they have veered swiftly away from this position which sits uncomfortably with their trendy middle class clientele, and now declare the IRA campaign to be 'trivial', 'random' and 'unhelpful to the cause of freedom and a distraction from the real issues at stake' (*Living Marxism*, December 1992).

Whilst the reaction of the Trotskyist left finds its sharpest expression in relation to Irish question, it is not restricted to these shores. During the uprisings of the 1980s in South Africa, the SWP condemned the armed struggle being waged by Umkhonto we Sizwe, the army of the ANC, as a campaign of guerrillaism isolated from the South African working class. It is only the sectarianism of the RCP or the SWP which has prevented them from commenting on the recent armed actions of APLA, armed wing of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, which claimed four white civilian lives in December.

Communists recognise that the right to self-determination necessarily includes the right of an oppressed people to choose the means by which they conduct their liberation struggle. The British left's squeamishness on the question of Ireland is not only indicative of its squeamishness on revolutionary, anti-imperialist violence in general, it also reveals their deep-seated hostility and chauvinism towards a revolutionary struggle that directly threatens British imperialism. This position has nothing whatsoever to do with Marxism.

Imperialism is violence

'The Marxist-Leninist doctrine on class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat affirms the role of violence in revolution, makes a distinction between unjust, counter-revolutionary violence and just, revolutionary violence, between the violence of the exploiting classes, and that of the masses.' (General Vo Nguyen Giap, 'The Political and Military Line of Our Party', *Selected Writings*)

As Marxists, therefore, we are not dealing with the question of violence in general, but of the legitimate violence of the working class against its oppressor, whether that take the form of the organised armed struggle waged by the National Liberation Army of Vietnam against French, Japanese and US imperialism, the rocks and stones of the *intifada*, or a campaign of bombs on the streets of

'... a just war, and it will go on, for true peace can only come from oppression and injustice ... the British people who choose to ignore this or to ... gutter press are responsible for the actions of their government unless they stand out against them.'
(Joe O'Connell, speech from the dock at the Balcombe Street trial)

The taking up of arms has proved to be a necessary and indeed inevitable response by the working class to the constant, organised brutality and oppression that is imperialism. Imperialism knows no other mode. Since the Second World War, there has been only one year in which British armed forces have not been involved in wars and counter-revolution somewhere in the world. Today, imperialist warmongers have again declared war in the Gulf and invaded Somalia, imperialist arms and money prop up the death-squad regimes of Latin America, the barbaric occupation of East Timor by Indonesia's Suharto regime, Turkey's war against the Kurds. By what other means do the idealists of the British left think the oppressed peoples of the world should oppose the armed brutality of a ruling class that will stop at nothing to protect its own interests?

Movements of the oppressed have travelled a long way down the road of peaceful resistance before resorting to violence - remember the civil rights movements of Ireland and of the black people of the USA, the anti-pass campaigns of South Africa, the petitions of the Chartist. It is the brutal response of a threatened ruling class which drives the movement to the point where it must say 'This far and no further'. The liberation armies of Azania/South Africa were formed in response to the massacre of peaceful demonstrators in Sharpeville. The context of the IRA bombs on the

bombs on the streets of London is the presence of British troops on the streets of Belfast and Derry.

For the facade of 'democracy' that masks imperialism's naked interests is rapidly stripped away when those interests are challenged. After the revolution of 1979, the Nicaraguans freely elected the Sandinistas to power, only to be terrorised and browbeaten into choosing, less than a decade later, a candidate more acceptable to Washington. What happened to the much-heralded democratic elections in Angola when the 'wrong' candidate won?

The arguments peddled by the British left to undermine armed struggle deny this reality, and are a naive and dangerous distraction. Lenin made the point clearly: while recognising that parliamentary democracy might in certain periods be a useful tool for the working class, he warned,

'tomorrow your ballot paper is taken from you and you are given a rifle or a splendid quick-firing gun - take this weapon of death and destruction, pay no heed to the mawkish snivelers who are afraid of war; too much still remains in the world that must be destroyed with fire and sword for the emancipation of the working class.' (V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol. 21)

The real issue

'Violence is the universal objective law of all thorough national liberation revolutions' (General Vo Nguyen Giap *ibid*)

As communists we want to see the working class take power. We recognise that the revolutionary process may go through all sorts of transformations, that it may be bought off, that it may stop before 'thorough' liberation is achieved. Only if within that movement, the working class is armed and organised can it ensure that the liberation struggle is brought to a socialist conclusion. James Connolly warned the Irish Citizens' Army shortly before the Easter Rising,

'In the event of victory, hold on to your guns, as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are out for economic as well as political liberty.'

All too often the middle classes have ridden to victory on the backs of the struggle of the working class, it is the working class who do, in George Jackson's words, most of the fighting and most of the dying. What inspires the fighters of the working class is not a love of violence, in which they have always borne the severest losses, but the knowledge that only force of arms can guarantee victory - for 'there is no successful liberation without violence' (George Jackson, *Solidad Brother*). In Vietnam, in Cuba, in the Soviet Union, throughout the world, the struggle of the working class for power has been fought through bitter and bloody battles. It is a little late for socialists to be squeamish about revolution. Indeed, even after victory, the warning to 'hold on to your guns' remains imperative. 14 countries invaded the Soviet Union immediately after the revolution. Do *Socialist Worker* really think that the US would not walk into Havana tomorrow if the Cubans did not possess weapons?

As communists, then, we defend absolutely the right of the oppressed people of the world to take up arms against imperialism - and not put them down until victory. Those who abandon this position, should indeed be 'ruthlessly dismissed from the ranks of the supporters of the revolution'. For as Lenin said of the renegade Kautsky,

'(he) has to resort to all these subterfuges, sophistries and falsifications only to excuse himself from violent revolution, and to conceal his renunciation of it, his desertion to the side of the liberal labour policy, the side of the bourgeoisie. That is the crux of the matter.'

Prison privatisation: the US experience

When approaching any political question on the inside of the nation's prisons, it is important to start from a radical rather than a liberal or reformist perspective.

It is progressive to work to extend democracy, as the ultimate realisation of that ideal will necessarily result in the complete abolition of prison slavery, and the establishment of a social order in which economic justice is an integral element of what today's rulers cynically call freedom.

The struggle to merely change prison conditions, on the other hand, can be readily granted. Indeed, reform is the state's second response to demands for cosmetic change (the first, of course, being the iron fist of repression). But more comfortable prisons are not what we seek. As John Bowden noted in *FRFI* 110: 'Living in a velvet-lined coffin is essentially no different from confinement in an obvious hate-factory - either way one is controlled and imprisoned against his will.'

Within this context we examine the privatisation question. It should be clear that privatising prisons would, in no way diminish their fundamental nature. But will bringing in corporate management make conditions better?

One argument put forward in support of privatisation, (Stephen Windsor *FRFI* 110) is that the programme

has worked so well in the US it should be implemented in Britain. A closer look reveals a somewhat different picture. For example, prisoners from a privately-run joint in Louisville, Kentucky have been used as scabs in the strike by UFCW Local 227 against Fischer Packing Company. Prisoners were brought into the plant after strikers rejected the company's 'best and final offer' by 402 to 2. Fischer was demanding large concessions. The union objected to the local government and was forced to call for a boycott of Fischer products. So, far from being well paid workers by our corporate masters, we can easily end up being underpaid scabs who bolster capitalist profits at the expense of the working class.

As for vocational training, I am not aware of a single example where such teaching takes place. Nor have I ever heard of prisoners having guaranteed employment upon release, except in the former Soviet Union. Every prison industry I've ever worked in had one goal and that was to make a profit. We are not even given vacations, paid or otherwise. While wages sometimes appear to approach the minimum wage, when taxes and



Exercise - a prisoner's right, which private companies are legally bound to respect; but how many 'rights' will they discard when profit is at stake?

mandatory payments for the cost of imprisonment are factored in, prisoners often wind up making more money by working in some non-industrial area of the prison. In any event, virtually all prison industries are jobs long ago shipped to Mexico and the so-called Third World, or which are done by illegal migrant labour (ie sweat shops). They are clearly not meaningful employment skills likely to result in a decent paying job on the outside.

The argument is sometimes raised that nobody could do a worse job of running the prisons than the people doing it now; that any change would necessarily be an improvement. Even if true, the logic of such reasoning would be short-lived. The moment the corporation must decide between the quality of your food, education or medical care, on the one hand, and company profits on the other, you will not need a calculator to figure out which will come first. Just look at their track record. In 1988 Rosalyn Bradford, a black woman prisoner at the Silverdale Work Farm, Tennessee which is run by the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) died of complications from an ectopic pregnancy after guards, believing she was faking, let her scream in her cell for 18 hours before taking her to a hospital. The CCA prospectus pledges that 'employees must undergo at least 160 hours of training by the company before being allowed to work in a position that will bring them in contact with inmates'. But the guard who attended Ms Bradford says she, like many others, was put to work a few hours after being hired and did not receive first aid training until a week after Bradford died.

Stephen Windsor believes incidents such as this will not happen because 'a government inspectorate... would make certain standards were set and adhered to.' Yeah! Just like the government regulates the industrialists around today's feeble environmental, health and safety laws; like they regulated our savings and loan institutions. In fact private prisons are essentially unregulated. Few state or local governments are willing to establish strict standards for fear of creating a set of entitlements that would encourage inmate lawsuits. Moreover, even modest standards,

whether implemented or not, would discourage corporate investment.

David Wechts (*The Yale Law Journal*, March 1987) cautions that standards would be hard to enforce, especially 'several years after the life of the [privatisation] contract, when corporate control of the state's penal system may have reached the point that the government no longer has the expertise, personnel, facilities or fiscal resources to run the prisons.' Also, according to the August 1988 issue of *In These Times*, 'More than one local government, after contracting out its prison or jail, has later asked about how it is being run only to be told that such information is "proprietary".'

Capitalists are driven to seek higher profit margins; it's the nature of the beast. When you go to a disciplinary hearing in a prison operated by a private company, you can bet you will lose good time credits. The existing system is already capacity driven; putting direct profit into the picture would only mean there would never be the lost revenue represented by an empty prison bed.

I for one have no desire to see this budding trend carried to its logical extreme: where we are treated to the sight of a multinational corporation like General Electric pulling the switch on some poor sap strapped into an electric chair, while airing the event on its NBC television network to the theme music of 'GE brings good things to life'. If the ruling class wishes to continue their enslavement of a segment of society, they should not be permitted to do it directly, for the purpose of profit. Their intermediary instrument of repression, the bourgeois state is quite well suited for that task.

Ed Mead (US political prisoner)

POWs' birthdays

Liam Quinn 49930, HMP Whitemoor, Longhill, March, Cambs, PE15 0SR 6 February
Michael McKenny 146486, HMP Full Sutton, York, YO4 1PS 7 February
Ella O'Dwyer D25135, HMP Durham, Old Elvet, Durham, DH1 3HU 3 March

Statement by John Bowden

On 18 December at Birmingham High Court, Justice Roberts finally delivered his judgement on my civil action against the Home Office. His judgement was damning: on 29 February 1989 I was subjected to an 'unprovoked and gratuitous beating-up' by between eight and ten prison officers in a special isolation unit at Winson Green, Birmingham. His award of £3,000 was immediately seized by the Home Office who declared it would remain beyond my reach while I remained 'at large'. I had escaped from prison custody a month earlier.

The judgement and my decision to escape were inextricably related. My beating-up at Winson Green represented a facet of my treatment by the prison system that I had long become accustomed to during 12 years of captivity; my decision to escape was as much an act of self-defence as one of rebellion. Firstly, the sheer length of my sentence (life with the stipulation I serve at least 25 years) effectively precluded the possibility of release until the state was satisfied I had been completely broken. Secondly, I had long been identified and targeted by the prison authorities as a 'dangerous subversive' and had experienced almost constant victimisation and brutality as a consequence. The reality was that such treatment would continue until I was either subdued or murdered - the imperative that confronted me was therefore straightforward: escape or die.

Justice Roberts' judgement, while critical of the Winson Green screws, conveniently ignored a whole body of evidence that revealed the complicity of senior prison management. Far from being a 'gratuitous' act by a relatively small group of uniformed thugs, the violence inflicted on me was the inevitable result of a prison system deliberately designed to

destroy resistance from those it holds captive. The Home Office had sanctioned my transfer to Winson Green after my involvement in a food strike at Long Lartin and it was inconceivable that such senior prison administrators were ignorant of the regime that awaited me as a 'trouble maker'.

As a prison activist with revolutionary Marxist beliefs I had long considered it my political duty to resist oppression in gaol and encourage and assist my brother prisoners to fight for their human rights - when I believed my life was in jeopardy as a result of my activities I then considered it my duty to try and escape. My liberation last year did not represent a cessation of political struggle or a desire to withdraw in any way from that struggle.

For the time being I'm living very much an underground existence around Europe and am constantly on the move - I shall probably remain so for the rest of my life. It is of course possible that I shall be eventually hunted down and either murdered or returned to prison for the remainder of my life - I accept such a possibility without fear or regret and in the same spirit that I fought my captivity for so long in prison.

INSIDE NEWS

NORMA JEAN CROY

Norma Jean Croy is a Native American woman who has spent 14 years in prison for a murder she did not commit. In fact, there was no murder. In 1978 she and her brother and cousins were involved in a misunderstanding with a verbally abusive store assistant in a small town. The police chased their car; a drunken cop fired on them and her brother acted in self defence.

After many years on death row her brother was finally granted a re-trial in 1989 and released. Norma never touched a weapon that night and was herself shot in the back. Yet she remains in prison. She has been refused a new trial on three occasions and denied parole on five.

Support the fight to free Norma. Write to the Norma Jean Croy Defense Committee, 473 Jackson Street, Third Floor, San Francisco, CA 94111, USA.

UGAH SALIH

Already serving life for a murder he did not commit, Ughah Salih has now been charged with another murder, about which he knows nothing, for which there is no body and no evidence. On the strength of this he has been made Category A, having served two and a half years as Cat B. He is being held in the notorious Wakefield prison, far from his family and solicitor who are all in London and, despite the cost involved in bringing him to London for court appearances, the Home Office has persistently refused him a transfer.

SEZAI MUSTAFA

Ever anxious to be seen to fight the 'war on drugs', HM Customs and Excise are using police tactics of 'if you can't get the right person, get anybody'.

Sezai Mustafa is in his third year of an 18 year sentence for importation of heroin. There were no confessions, no forensic evidence, only a car which Mr Mustafa sold to the perpetrator of the smuggling who has himself sworn in court and in numerous statements that Sezai was in no way involved.

Sezai is in Long Lartin. He has been refused leave to appeal once and applied a second time citing fresh evidence and new witnesses.

Nicki Jameson

STRANGWAYS

I am a defendant in the Strangeways trial and it is obvious from the way the trial is proceeding that many authorities are conspiring to pervert justice. Many warders have shown discrepancies in oral evidence and contradictory to written evidence. It is obvious the trial judge supports the authorities in using us 12 as scapegoats and the CPS are gloating about the fact.

Alan Lord was acquitted in the first trial. At the pre-trial review, the CPS announced 'because Paul Taylor and John Spencer received lengthy sentences we are not proceeding against them.' Mr Lord's counsel emphasised that Alan Lord was doing the lengthiest sentence (life). It is an attack by the CPS to discriminate against Alan Lord and has racial undertones.

The Strangeways trial is a farce.
Barry Morton, on behalf of the Strangeways 12.

PS Following the escape of Mark Azarpardi and David Bowen, Alan Lord was re-instated to Category A. Is Lord being victimised for other peoples' escapes?

Defeat from the jaws of victory

Defeat from the Jaws of Victory - Inside Kinnock's Labour Party
Richard Heffernan and Mike Marqusee - Verso 1992

Time for a little revisionism. Marxists have previously argued that the adherence of sections of the British middle class to the Labour Party had a firm material base. Thus we have explained the mysterious belief of tens of thousands of people calling themselves socialists, that the Labour Party is a (in fact THE) vehicle for socialist advance. Having read this book I think we may have missed a simpler explanation - masochism, a perverse delight in pain and thwarted desire. The upper classes give vent to this in a straightforward way - down to Threshers for a bottle of champers and then off to Thrashers for some Treasury bondage. But the middle class socialist has found a form of torture more exquisitely painful - a belief that the Labour Party will one day introduce socialism. Such a credo provides more daily disappointment and pain than Miss Whiplash.

Only perversity on a grand scale can rationally explain how the two authors - Heffernan and Marqusee - can damningly catalogue the most appalling record of cynicism, lust for power, instinctive fear and hatred of the working class and consistent annihilation of the various Labour lefts by the Labour Party and yet still say:

'we are more committed than ever to our involvement in the LP, which we believe is still the only vehicle for positive social change available to working people in this country.'

Almost every page of their book contains enough detail about the real, reactionary face of Labour to convince anybody that Labour is not an instrument for social change except of an authoritarian and right-wing character. But, whatever their beliefs, the authors have done an immensely valuable service in recording the revolting inside story of the Kinnock years.

Kinnock - A Fitting Leader for a Corrupt Party

The authors have got the measure of Kinnock: 'limited personal ability allied to unlimited arrogance'. This was a deadly combination: a weak and stupid man whose only driving force was personal ambition. How was he picked? After the disastrous defeat of the Callaghan government in 1979 came the sorry saga of Michael Foot's leadership. It was clear

to those who actually run the Labour Party - a handful of trade union bosses - that a new leader was required. Appropriately Kinnock was allegedly chosen by these trade union bosses at a barbecue at the American Embassy. They saw him as best suited to push the party to the right because he had a carefully built reputation amongst the left. In the 1970s Kinnock backed nationalisation of all production and distribution industries; workers' control; confiscation of all incomes over £10,000 (£46,000 at today's levels); supported mandatory reselection of MPs and more Party control over the Manifesto. Such left postures were necessary in that period of Labour Party history.

By the 1980s such positions were a liability for careerists and if Kinnock was to move up the ladder he had to make a decisive break with his past. He did so in 1981 by publicly repudiating Benn's challenge against Healey for the deputy leadership. 'By breaking with the Labour left he had proved his credentials with the media and the establishment; when push came to shove, they now knew Neil Kinnock could be counted on to serve their interests.' His reward came at that barbecue two years later.

With Kinnock as leader, Hattersley stood for deputy - a team mysteriously known as the 'dream ticket'. Michael Meacher stood against Hattersley. The fight was furious and Kinnock displayed the personal spite which he later elevated to a science, saying Meacher was 'as weak as hell' and Benn 'unable to knock the skin off of a rice pudding'. By an oversight the TGWU Executive was allowed to vote on this and backed Meacher. The dream ticketers then put it about that four members of the Executive were 'communists'. It was an unfortunate start to their witchhunting tactics, as it was then revealed that two of these Communist Party firebrands had in fact voted for Hattersley. Not that it mattered; the TGWU leadership ignored the Executive and voted for Hattersley anyway.

Kinnock had arrived. It was the supreme irony that the 'right' Hattersley was later to joke to Tony Benn that there was by the late 1980s no one to his left inside the Shadow Cabinet. A few years of Kinnockism had produced a regime that was more authoritarian than any seen before. Kinnock, a master of back stabbing, vendetta and patronage, had reduced the Labour Party lefts (if we can call them that) to a state of quivering fear. He found time in his busy schedule to spend a day a month overseeing expulsions and disciplinary hearings.

Leaders had traditionally found the Labour Party factional and hard to control. Kinnock used the tactics of the bully. He built his coterie of servile toadies and battered everyone else into submission. Submission meant a possible government career, opposition of the mildest kind (and it was usually of the mildest kind) meant exile. With the NEC packed with his cronies, Kinnock could expect to win almost any motion 27 to 2. 'Under Kinnock's leadership, and with the help of "soft left" NEC members such as David Blunkett, Robin Cook, John Prescott and Clare Short, Labour's once-mighty NEC became an ineffectual body, without the power or will to form Labour strategy...' (p120)

The tactic of granting office to the loyal meant that at one point more than 40% of the Parliamentary LP had shadow ministerial posts - making the shadow team larger than the government. If MPs agreed to leave the 'left' Campaign group they were promoted. For example, Kevin Barron, MP for a mining area, whose arm was broken by police during the strike, suddenly denounced the Campaign group. Within days he was given a

parliamentary private secretary's job. Later as part of the Front Bench Energy team he played a leading role in fuelling the *Daily Mirror's* smear campaign against miners' leader Arthur Scargill.

No price was too high to court favour. Jack Cunningham, Environment Spokesman, had close links with British Nuclear Fuels and has a photograph of Sellafield nuclear plant on his office wall. Although a Kinnock loyalist he fell temporarily into disfavour. His response was to make a speech to Labour Conference saying that Kinnock's Conference address (his usual combination of windbagery and spleen) was 'commanding and exhilarating', 'dramatic and moving', he was the most 'courageous, charismatic, inspirational and committed leader of any party in Britain'. A low ranking male baboon exhibits more personal dignity in its dealings with its peck leader.



Kinnock tolerated no dissent. Norman Buchan was dismissed for making the innocuous proposal that media control be given to the minister for Arts rather than the Home Office. Even the ultra right-wing Kaufmann was given the rumours-spread-via-informal-press-briefings treatment 'not apparently for any political reason but simply to show who was boss.' And they relied entirely on his support. Thus when Kaufmann was challenged in his local constituency, the general committee enforced a short list of one - Kaufmann. Members could vote yes or no but the Labour leadership let it be known that anyone campaigning against him would be disciplined. Or Margaret Beckett - a previous Bennite; she broke with the left in 1988 and got shadow cabinet appointment. 'Her conversion to an almost Thatcherite laissez-faire policy... was followed through with astonishing rigour' (p 144) These and other grim details pile up for page after page. If human nature was judged with reference to the Labour Party, the verdict would be bleak indeed.

With the party firmly under his control and with leftists either becoming born-again pro-marketisers or, more rarely, going into exile, Kinnock turned his jaundiced gaze to the outside world. And he saw Arthur Scargill and the miners.

How Labour Beat the Miners

Thatcher's determination to destroy the NUM is legendary. Kinnock's deserves to be. When the miners began their strike to save jobs and communities in 1984 it was clear that the government wanted to destroy them and with them crush all other impulses to struggle. The press, the police, the courts, were all drafted in. Labour looked at the two sides and did not hesitate for a second - it was with Thatcher. Kinnock particularly hated Scargill who represented all that Kin-

nock did not - socialist convictions, backbone and a working class base. If the miners won it meant that Kinnockism was doomed. Labour first used the tried and tested tactics of inactivity. Not once did they issue a leaflet or statement in their support. Kinnock stubbornly refused to use Opposition debating time to raise the strike in Parliament. When finally a debate was held in June, Kinnock did not even attend. The leadership's motion at the NEC opposed pit closures, but the left had to add an amendment in support of the strikers. In July as miners were being battered and arrested on picket lines, Kinnock let his passion show: 'I condemn violence, I abhor violence, I damn violence - all violence. All violence, without fear or favour. That's what I do... the only side I'm prepared to take when it comes to violence is to oppose it'. This when the press were continually lying about who was actually using violence - the police. At the December NEC an NUM member proposed a LP national demonstration in support of the miners - Kinnock said they needed 'longer notice'. Instead they decided to consult the TUC and NUM about holding a mass rally. This was finally held in February without support from the LP leadership, Front Bench or NEC.

At the September TUC in 1985, after the strike was over, a motion was carried (against General Council advice) calling on the next Labour government to reinstate sacked miners and reimburse NUM funds which had been sequestered. At the Labour conference Kinnock opposed the motion saying: 'the strike wore on the violence built up', 'the court actions came and as a consequence of their attitude to the court actions the NUM leadership ensured that they would face crippling damages'.

Always for Kinnock it was those who fought against Thatcher - and suffered for it - who were to blame. How great it is to see that today, when the miners are again threatened, large scale public sympathy is with them. Scargill lives to fight on. Kinnock, the autocrat who lectured the miners about 'democracy', is a visibly diminished figure appearing on the odd TV quiz show. Yet still the Labour Party carries on with its traditional policy of not supporting the miners.

Every Dog Has its Day

Kinnock's day came after the miners were defeated. Determined to use this episode to remould the Labour Party to meet the wishes and dreams of *Daily Mail* readers, Kinnock found a strange ally. The Communist Party. In 1990 Martin Jacques, leading CP theorist (before the CP disbanded itself) boasted that the CP had made 'much of the intellectual running for Labour's Kinnockite revolution', and that 'The CP in the eighties acted like the Labour revisionists of the fifties... it was the main centre of opposition to the Scargill strategy in the miners' strike. It has been the ideological protagonist of the hard left'.

Jacques and co. argued that Thatcherism represented the working class in the modern age of home ownership and affluence. Labour must espouse the middle classes because everyone was middle class now (except the poor, the old, the black etc - and they didn't count). The loss of the 1987 election strengthened the view that only by espousing market capitalism could Labour win. Brian Gould put it in his usual pretty way: 'We need to develop radical policies which are not only true to our socialist values but also appeal to the self-interest of those whose votes we need'. They argued that new values were needed: 'individualism' and 'consumerism'. At a Fabian society



conference Peter Mandelson, Head of Labour's Communications said that people thought the LP was no longer for them but 'blacks, or for gays or for losers'.

With this audience firmly in mind Labour rewrote its policies, deleting even its usual vague welfarism. It distanced itself even more sharply from any external struggle, such as the fight against the Poll Tax. It out Union-jacked Thatcher, dumped unilateralism and, when Conference passed a resolution calling for defence cuts, Kinnock said Labour's defence policy would be what was best for Britain. 'We live in the world of realities, not resolutions'. Labour got its big chance when the Gulf War came.

As soon as war in the Gulf was mooted, Labour gave it full and unequivocal backing. It had the opportunity to force a debate on the issue and chose not to. Edward Heath was well to their left with his cautious warnings. Labour felt impelled to go further than the Tories; thus it not only backed Major's aims of getting Iraq out of Kuwait but called for the complete disarming of Iraq, a position whose logic is now being played out. Kinnock criticised lack of EC cooperation for the war effort and called on Japan and Germany to pay more. The vast majority of Labour MPs fell in behind Colonel Kinnock, who repeatedly told Labour internal meetings about the war that 'we must get elected'. 250,000 dead Iraqis paid for Kinnock's ambitions.

Kinnockism - The Rule Not the Exception

Kinnock left the Labour Party smaller, poorer and with another lost election under its belt. He had also destroyed Labour's youth wing and instigated disciplinary actions or investigations affecting over 80 constituencies. Charges ranged from 'conduct prejudicial to the Party' to 'insulting the Party leader'. In the 251 cases a standard of evidence prevailed that makes British courts look positively fair. Evidence included things like 'seen clapping at an anti-Poll Tax meeting'. The authors also detail how candidates were imposed on local parties and black candidates prevented from being selected.

Anyone with socialist leanings who still supports the Labour Party should be forced to read this book. Because, despite the authors' naive view that Labour can be reformed and made a vehicle for socialism, the facts in their book are against them. As is the history of Labour and its current debate about 'Clintonisation'. Kinnockism was no aberration, it was the norm for a party which has never represented the working class. Surely anyone who wants genuinely to see some socialist advance should know this by now.

Maxine Williams



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Anti-Sovietism is pro-imperialism

In FRFI 110, Anthony Bidgood complains that 'anti-Soviet Marxist parties' are excluded by the RCG from the trends which could contribute towards rebuilding a new international communist movement. In my opinion the RCG are quite correct to have such a position.

The concern of the anti-Soviet groupings has consistently been to side with imperialism. In Poland they supported the anti-socialist Solidarnosc. In Iran the reactionary Mullahs, and in Afghanistan the barbaric Mujahedin pro-feudalists. Nor is their support for imperialism simply a historical matter. In the *A World to Win* journal no. 14 (1989) and no. 15 (1990), two major articles made it quite clear that the so-called Revolutionary International Movement, one of the largest anti-Soviet currents, would welcome the overthrow of Cuba.

The RCG has always made explicit its support for regimes attempting a process of socialist construction. Those who denounced every attempt to construct socialism and are now busy condemning Cuba, occupy the opposite side of a clearcut international class divide to those, like the RCG, who support Cuba's right to resist imperialism. I do not see this as a matter for dialogue: the anti-Soviet Marxists are as profoundly anti-communist as many of the Western Trotskyist groups.

Bidgood argues that the anti-Soviet Marxists' reasons for opposing the USSR was not to join the imperialists in attacking what you term the socialist states - but because they believed that the Soviet Union's socialism had been destroyed with the seizure of power by Nikita Khrushchev and his group in 1956 and the rapid restoration of capitalism.



Chinese workers demonstrate support for Stalin on the first anniversary of the Chinese Republic, 1951.

For anyone who knows anything about Soviet history it is fairly clear that Khrushchev, far from being in a position to seize power, was a compromise candidate acceptable to the ruling elite. Bidgood never mentions that the notion of Khrushchev 'seizing power' to promote capitalist restoration only entered public discourse with the advent of the Sino-Soviet split. The 'Soviet imperialist' theory must be viewed very much with this context in mind.

The Maoist theory that the Soviet Union was capitalist since the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU is nonsense.

It is necessary for the proponents of this theory to show that the economy of the USSR was governed by capitalist laws of motion. They cannot do this.

A critique of the Soviet Union from *Politics and Money* is an early indicator of the oblique nature of the 'proofs' of Soviet capitalism. P&M points out that the Soviet Union concluded important trade deals with the West. This fairly mundane fact is given a particular interpretation. The West trades with the USSR

'because they have recognised that the Soviet Union is no longer a revolutionary power.'

(Vol 14, no. 3, July/September 1973, p34)

The theory of capitalist restoration remains at the level of implication. The Revolutionary Union - who later became the RCP(US), in a work which appeared just over a year later, are

The *Red Papers* see the potential restoration of capitalism as inherent in the type of revolution, which takes place in a backward country under extremely adverse conditions. The intellectuals and bourgeois experts, whom the new regime is forced to rely on in these circumstances, always hold the the capacity to form a rival bourgeois centre, and they will inevitably enter the new ruling party in order to subvert its ostensible aims. This means then:

... that the main focus of the class struggle under socialism is within the Party itself, and particularly in its top ranks, and that the target of the proletariat in this struggle is the "handful of capitalist roadsters" who repeatedly emerge, especially within the top Party leadership. (*Red Papers*, p13)

Whilst not denying that the

composition of the party leadership is important in any revolution, and especially in one occurring in an economically backward country, this position is essentially idealist. There is no room for the masses in such an analysis. The party is seen as autonomous from society at large, and capitalism can be restored secretly from above. The Maoist account of socialist construction is personalist and, in some cases, little more than uncritical support for Stalin. It was Stalin who held back the floodgates of revisionism, and when he died so, effectively, did socialism. (In China the death of Mao promoted a similar 'theory').

Finally, if the Soviet Union has been capitalist since, for the sake of argument, 1956, what is happening now? Is Yeltsin restoring feudalism or what?

I have barely had space to touch upon this very important debate here. Can I recommend to your readers a book by the late Al Szymanski, *Is the Red Flag Flying?*, which is one of the very best introductions to this discussion? TED TALBOT Nottingham

This letter has had to be shortened for reasons of space.

Shattering illusions in Labour

Just a note to acknowledge the copy of *Labour: A Party Fit for*

Imperialism by Robert Clough... I am well pleased with the publication, a very well researched and presented work, highlighting the inherent contradictions and shattering the illusions of Labour's policies since its inception. Yes! most definitely a good publication from a radical perspective - it is a revelation to me!

Thank you for raising my awareness and keep up the good work! EAMONN O'DONNELL HMP Wakefield

Lambeth and the poll tax

On 11 January, a group of us attended a Lambeth Council sub-committee meeting, where the problem facing the Labour-led council - whose attitude to the poll tax is 'Okay, we think it is iniquitous but we're still going to set it at an affordable rate and implement it' - was what to do about the 74,000 people who do not think it is 'okay' and haven't paid it, leaving arrears of £86m uncollected poll tax!

On the agenda was the proposal to consider recommending a commitment to go to non-payers of Lambeth against the Poll Tax. The committee has adopted a delay tactic, so that each individual case will have to be considered by a 'hardship committee' prior to full council meeting - which will then, no doubt, feel free to recommend going with a clean conscience. So the struggle against the poll tax continues! PAM ROBINSON South London

Oiling the machinery of repression

Driving home late one night in January, I was stopped at a police roadblock. The policeman who flagged me down was uniformed, but with him, and positioned along Farringdon Road, were 10-15 armed police, all holding machine guns. Torches were shone into cars, and all the motorists asked where they were going before being allowed to drive on.

The powers of the Metropolitan Police Act were used to set up roadblocks such as these all over London during the IRA bombing campaign in December, with barely a word of protest from the bourgeois press. Today, they are becoming routine on major routes through London. Anti-Irish hysteria has once again been allowed to pave the way for ever more direct attacks on civil liberties in Britain. In this how we are to be acclimatised to armed police patrols on our streets? What will happen the day a driver does not stop at a roadblock? Will the police shoot - as they do in Belfast? This grotesque display of police powers is only a small taste of what the nationalist community in the north of Ireland has to endure on a daily and still more oppressive basis: nevertheless, it should serve as a salutary reminder to the movement here that every time we fail to oppose the British state's attacks on the Irish people, we are oiling the machinery for our own repression. CAT WIENER South London

Not in my name

I am glad God is not on my side. He's been the excuse for too many dead. When I broke my arm it flopped, floundered and an eel of agony made it unable to pick up the phone for help to get to casualty. I used the other one.

The X-ray showed I had smashed the head of just one bone.

Let pain at least be electricity to the imagination, connecting me along that snake

mile upon mile of people fleeing north and massacred with the uncounted bodies in cut off Baghdad When they ploughed the conscripts in and buried them alive did they consider what seed they sowed?

Ask the dark Crusade? More just war?? I am glad God is not on my side. Dinah Livingstone

This poem was written during the Gulf War of 1991. Dinah Livingstone's new book of poetry, *Second Sight*, will be published in May 1993 by Katabasis.

Support Michael Hegarty!

On 16 October 1992, the circulation manager of the Dublin-based paper *Saoirse Irish Freedom* was arrested by British crown forces, taken to Cough Barracks Interrogation Centre in Armagh and charged with 'possession of information which could be useful to terrorists.'

Michael Hegarty is being held on remand in Crumlin Road gaol, in what is a deliberate attack on the Republican newspaper's right to report on the activities of loyalist death squad killings in the Armagh area. Michael had written an article for *Saoirse*

about a Portlaoine-based UVF unit behind the murder of about 24 nationalists in the East Tyrone/North Armagh/South Derry area since November 1988.

Michael and political prisoners like him can be subjected to 'interment by remand' and held for months, even years, before the case comes to court. The system is never in any great hurry to have Irish remand prisoners go before the courts, preferring to have them locked away. I have therefore written in the knowledge that your comrades have a clear understanding of the struggles faced by Irish prisoners, and hope you will support Michael Hegarty A9999, C Wing, Crumlin Road gaol, Belfast BT14 6AE. LAWRENCE MORTON Dundee

FRFI Discussion Group

North London FRFI will be discussing the major feature articles in this issue of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* above the Advice Centre, Greenland Road, Camden Town NW1 (2 mins walk from Camden tube) on the following dates:

Tuesday 16 February, 7.30pm
COMMUNISM, FUNDAMENTALISM & THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE
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Carlos Tablada speaks

Carlos Tablada, Cuban economist and socialist, and author of *The Political and Economic Thought of Che Guevara* will be addressing a public meeting on **Saturday 27 February** at 7.30pm, TUC, Congress House, Great Russell St, London WC1
Tablada's visit to Britain is organised by Pathfinder Press and supported by a number of organisations including the RCG

Fortress Europe and the Asylum Bill



Silks try to register for asylum at the Berlin Immigration office

The formation of a single market for European big business requires adjustments to the controls over the movement and rights of labour. European Community (EC) states are co-ordinating a programme of repressive legislation which tramples over the rights of Asian and African people in particular, whether they be in Asia, Africa, at ports-of-entry into the EC, held in detention centres or living in Europe as EC nationals. TREVOR RAYNE analyses the racist rationale behind the Asylum Bill.

For many Asian and African people living in EC countries '1992' means no freedom of movement, no right to a united family, restrictions on rights to belong to political organisations and take part in political activities, restrictions on rights to join trade unions, barriers to access to social security, education, health treatment and employment. The British Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill conforms with a pan-European policy dubbed 'Fortress Europe': the drawing-up of the drawbridge on would-be refugees and immigrants seeking to enter EC countries. It is racist and, just as it is an instrument of national oppression wielded by European states against people in Asia and Africa, so it is also an instrument which attacks people here in Britain. Such legislation takes place in a context of worsening economic and social crisis within the EC and chaos and devastation in poor and oppressed nations.

The number of refugees worldwide has risen from 12 million in 1987 to 18 million in 1992. The number of applications for asylum made to western European countries rose from 169,000 in 1988 to 327,000 in 1990. For Britain the figure increased tenfold between 1988-91 to approximately 40,000, of whom less than 1 in 10 were allowed to stay. Under the UN Convention on Refugees, which Britain signed in 1951, a refugee is someone who has a 'well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion or politics'. This definition can therefore exclude people fleeing wars, ecological disasters and famine.

Without formally redefining 'refugee', the British government has changed its policy. Ten years ago 67 per cent of asylum seekers granted permission to stay in Britain were

given refugee status and 12 per cent 'exceptional leave to remain'. In recent years the proportion has been 65 per cent 'exceptional leave to remain', 25 per cent refugee status. The status of 'exceptional leave to remain' carries fewer rights than that of 'refugee'; it is temporary, annually renewable and those awarded it have to carry a document (IS96) which states that the holder is liable to be detained at any time without formal arrest.

Immigration controls serve capital's need for a reserve army of labour. EC unemployment over the 1980s averaged 9.6 per cent; today it is about 10.7 per cent, and in Britain 'officially' 10.5 per cent. This is a sufficiently large army of surplus labour and furthermore it is now considered an unbearable burden on the social security system. European capital now views immigrants and refugees as both too costly relative to the value that can be got out of them and as a potential source of political instability and opposition.

The UN Convention states that asylum seekers should not be penalised for arriving without proper documentation. People fleeing repression are hardly likely to queue up at the offices of their persecutor for the requisite forms. Nevertheless, Britain passed the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act in 1987 which allows airlines that carry people without proper documentation to be fined. Since 1987 the Act has raised some £34 million. As immigration from Asia and Africa has been almost completely closed off, so now must be refugees and visitors and anyone else who will not yield sufficient contribution to profits.

Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke recently produced figures purporting to demonstrate that only 1 in 20 asy-

lum seekers to Britain qualified to stay out of the 24,500 applications received in 1992. Across the EC Clarke's counterparts speak of 'bogus applicants', 'floods of refugees' etc. Immigration officials, police and fascist gangs take their cue. The stories that ever surface are horrific: Panchadcharam Sahitharan, the Tamil refugee killed by a gang in Newham on 3 January last year; Ruhullah Arameah, the Afghan refugee murdered with iron bars in Thornton Heath last summer; Abdulrahman, an Ethiopian refugee beaten, stabbed and left to die on railway tracks in Bavaria; three unnamed Sri Lankans burned to death in a hostel in Hesse etc. Last year there were double the number of racist attacks in Britain as there were in Germany. Politicians blame refugees for their fate and pass laws which criminalise them. Ministers wash their hands of the blood of a Tamil or a Kurd killed by fascists in Europe while arming Sri Lankan and Turkish state forces. Immigration policy and foreign policy are two expressions of a single imperial policy: national oppression.

Currently, Europe takes only 5 per cent of the world's refugees; poor and underdeveloped nations provide sanctuary for 83 per cent. Countries like Pakistan and Sudan with incomes per head 3 per cent that of Britain take 10 to 20 times the proportion of refugees to total population. The cost of the refugees is to be borne by those least able to afford it - the poor nations.

EC policy

EC policy combines any relaxation of internal border controls with a tightening of external controls. Freedom of movement for EC nationals has a

corollary of fiercer restrictions on non-EC nationals both attempting to enter the EC and move between EC countries. Significantly, the external controls carry with them internal powers, for example, to stop and search, demand identification, detain without charge, that inevitably fall upon all people of non-European ancestry in the EC.

The Trevi Group, an ad-hoc association of EC Home Office and Justice Ministers with security advisers, has formulated much EC immigration and asylum policy. This Group exists outside of formal EC structures and its proceedings are kept secret on 'security' grounds. Trevi encouraged the Carriers' Liability legislation and identified 59 countries, visitors from which need visas to enter EC countries.

The model for EC border policies was the 1985 Treaty of Schengen signed by Germany, France and the Benelux countries. Movement between the five nations for EC nationals was made easier while visa restrictions on non-EC nationals attempting to enter any of the five countries were coordinated and stiffened. A common list of *personae non gratae* was established with a shared computer data base of 'undesirables'. Schengen increased status checks with accompanying powers within the Treaty countries. Schengen's signatories have extended to include Italy, Portugal, Spain and Greece.

In 1991 a European Commission document stated its intention to combat 'abuse of the right to asylum' and accelerated procedures to deal with 'manifestly ill-founded applications'. The Commission approved of measures 'aimed at making the material situation of asylum seekers less attractive while their case is being considered; withholding of certain social security benefits, restrictions on employment and freedom of movement', and the setting up of fingerprint registers for asylum seekers.



French police treat 'illegal aliens' in a prison

The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill

The Bill is intended to keep refugees out of Britain and the EC, to make them stay in the oppressed nations, to strip any who make it to Britain of their rights and to make the lives of those who are here sufficiently unpleasant that they would wish they had gone somewhere else. For many with 'exceptional leave to remain' status it signals deportation. It will prevent even family visits from relatives in Africa and Asia to their kin settled in Britain.

Among the Bill's clauses are:

- Any asylum applicant who comes via a third country deemed 'safe' by the Home Office can be excluded.
- If the applicant comes from a country some part of which is deemed 'safe' for the applicant they too can be excluded. So a Tamil might be excluded if the

Home Office considers Colombo 'safe'.

- Applicants must carry valid documents and if an airline infringes it will pay double the previous level of fine.
- People turned away at entry points will have their passports marked and this mark will be a rejection applicable throughout the EC.
- Asylum seekers and their families, including children, will be fingerprinted and these prints will be put on a new European database. Refusal to be fingerprinted may lead to arrest and a rejection of asylum application. Under English criminal law the lower age limit for fingerprinting is 10. No such limit applies to asylum seekers. Only those who are accused or convicted of a recordable crime have to give fingerprints. Again, this is breached in the case of asylum seekers. The fingerprints are to be kept for up to 10 years and distributed across the EC.
- Applicants must lodge their request for asylum immediately. If they are rejected they have 48 hours in which to assemble a case and lodge an appeal. A deliberate and callous way of excluding people, many of whom will be too traumatised and unable to represent or express themselves coherently.
- The Bill proposes amending the homelessness legislation to remove the right to permanent accommodation for asylum seekers. To get on to council priority lists refugees will have to prove that there is nowhere else they can stay while their case is considered. Even then they will only be entitled to bed and breakfast accommodation, just as the Carriers' Liability Act turned airline personnel into quasi-immigration officers, so the Bill intends to do the same to council employees who will award housing on the basis of immigration status.
- The power to detain asylum seekers pending deportation is extended. Currently, this power covers those who apply for asylum at a port-of-entry. Under its extension it will apply to those who have lawfully entered Britain, for example as students or visitors and then applied for asylum.
- An applicant must not undertake 'any activities in the United Kingdom before or after lodging his application calculated to enhance his claim for asylum'. This is the prohibition of the right to protest, to demonstrate, to organise in one's own defence or against the regime which persecuted the applicant. It is a blow aimed against those such as the Kurds, the Turks and the Tamils who have been vociferous opponents of British and EC foreign policy which has contributed to their plight.
- Clause 10 of the Bill removes the right of appeal for foreign visitors, students and intending students who are refused temporary visas to enter Britain. People who want to come and see their families, attend weddings or funerals can be denied with no right to redress. African and Asian people make up just 10 per cent of visitors to Britain but constitute 70 per cent of all refusals. Approximately 1 in 5 Bangladeshis is refused entry as a visitor. For US visitors the figure is 1 in every 2,400! This is the Bill the government called 'colour-blind'. Of the 80,000 intending visitors who were rejected in 1991, 10,000 appealed and 2,000 won. The removal of the right to appeal elevates Home Office and immigration officer racism to unfettered power. ■